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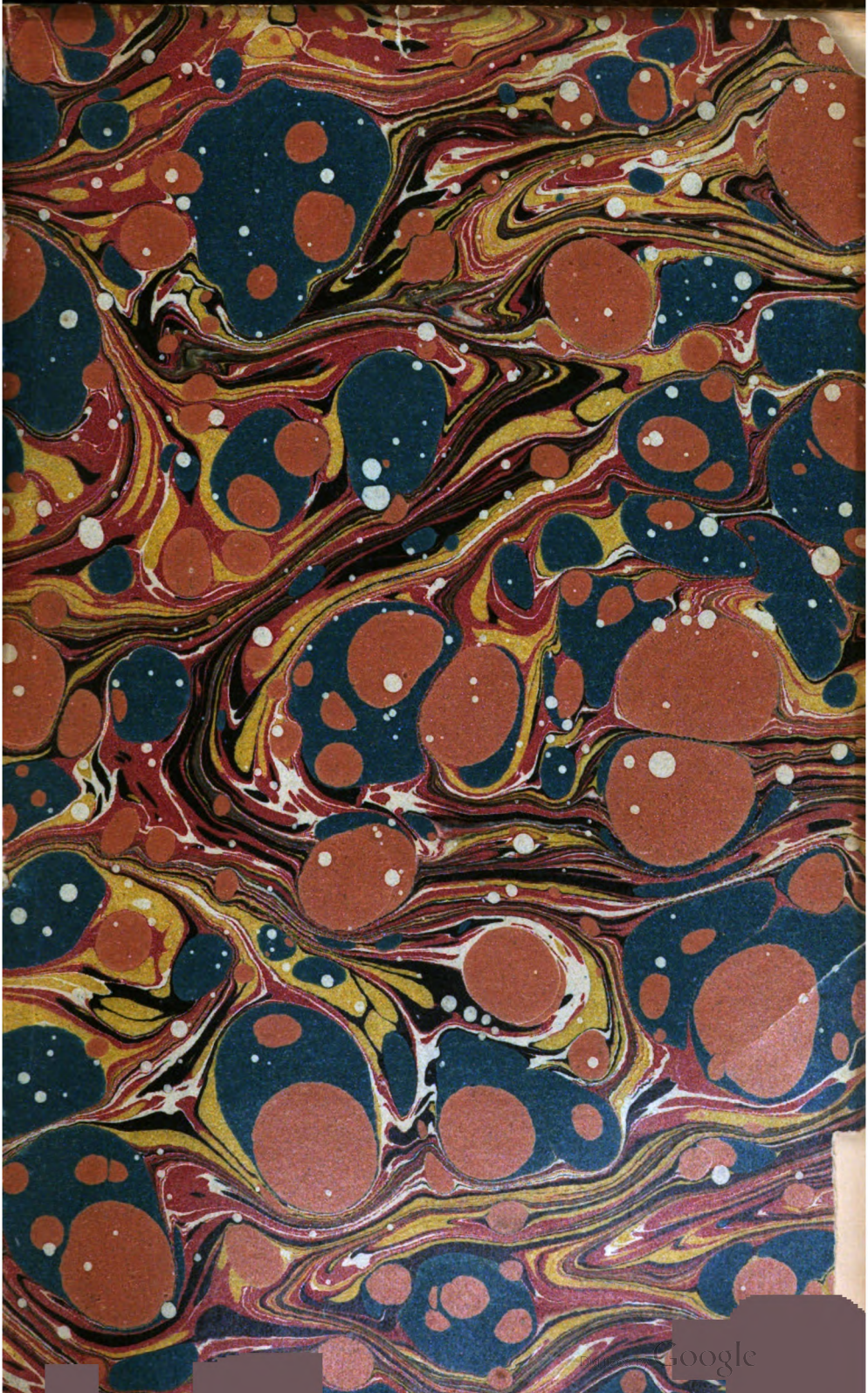
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THE

WORKS

OF

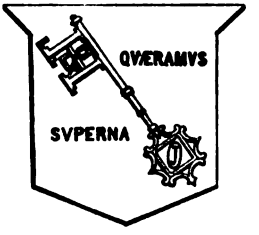
JOHN OWEN, D.D.

EDITED

BY THE REV. WILLIAM H. GOOLD,

EDINBURGH.

VOL. VII.



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THE NATURE OF APOSTASY FROM THE PROFESSION OF THE GOSPEL AND THE PUNISHMENT OF APOSTATES DECLARED,

IN

AN EXPOSITION OF HEB. VI. 4-6;

WITH

AN INQUIRY INTO THE CAUSES AND REASONS OF THE DECAY OF THE POWER OF RELIGION IN THE WORLD, OR THE PRESENT GENERAL DEFECTION FROM THE TRUTH, HOLINESS, AND WORSHIP OF THE GOSPEL; ALSO, OF THE PRONENESS OF CHURCHES AND PERSONS OF ALL SORTS UNTO APOSTASY.

WITH REMEDIES AND MEANS OF PREVENTION.

Search the Scriptures.—John v. 39.

LONDON: 1676.

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PREFATORY NOTE.

It is not uncommon for Christians, in a desponding mood, to ascribe unusual degeneracy in morals and religion to their own age. The sudden change, however, from the strict decorum of the Commonwealth to the licence which marked the reign of Charles II. has often been the subject of speculation and inquiry. Mr Macaulay thus confirms our author's estimate of the rapid decline of morality at this time:—"A change still more important took place in the morals and manners of the community. Those passions and tastes which, under the rule of the Puritans, had been sternly repressed, and, if gratified at all, had been gratified by stealth, broke forth with ungovernable violence as soon as the check was withdrawn."—Hist. of Eng., vol. i. p. 179. The historian, dealing with the surface of affairs rather than with the springs of conduct, may account the vulgar theory of a reaction against enforced strictness sufficient to explain this sudden lowering of the moral tone of a community; and in regard to a portion of society the theory may be admitted to be correct. The causes of the change, however, must have lain deeper; the blighting influence extended even into Puritan circles, where the contamination of courtly vices could hardly reach, and where early training would countervail any cessation of restraint, and beyond Britain, into other countries, where a similar decline can be traced, for which it is impossible to account simply on the principle of a reaction. Puritan decorum might as well be said to have been a mere reaction against such irreligious frivolity as bore the stamp of royal sanction in the "Book of Sports." Besides, the austerity ascribed to the Puritans is absurdly exaggerated; many a glimpse we possess into their domestic life shows that in reality it was the chosen scene of every genial influence, and household affections never appeared to more advantage than in the families of the Henrys. Owen, with his usual wisdom, avoids the extreme generalization that would resolve the complex apostasy of his age into any one predominant cause, and reviews in succession various influences which conspired to produce the result deplored. His treatise will be found to be a successful treatment of a deeply interesting question; and it closes in a strain of solemn appeal, appropriate to a work written, according to its author, "amid prayers and tears."

It is in substance an expansion of his commentary on Heb. vi. 4–6; and his Exposition on this passage is accordingly brief and meagre, having been forestalled by the publication of this treatise. Doddridge seems to regard it as most replete with the characteristic excellencies of Owen. "Owen's style," he remarks, "resembles St Paul's. There is great zeal and much knowledge of human life discovered in all his works, especially in his book on Apostasy. The 'Means of Understanding the Mind of God' is one of his best."

ANALYSIS.

The basis of the discourse is Heb. vi. 4–6; and inquiry is made,—I. Into the connection of the words; 2. The persons spoken of; 3. The supposition implied respecting them; and, 4. The truth affirmed on that supposition, chap. I. A charge of partial, as distinguished from final and complete apostasy, is adduced against all the churches and nations of Christendom; the claim of the Church of Rome to be indefectible is refuted, II. I. Apostasy from the *doctrines of the gospel* is illustrated by facts in the history of the ancient church, and by the predictions of the apostles, who foretold,—1. That the teachers of the gospel would soon corrupt its simplicity, by an admixture of vain philosophy; 2. That heresies would arise, consisting of unintelligible vagaries, as Gnosticism, and affecting the person of Christ, as Arianism, or the grace of Christ, as Pelagianism; 3. That men would be impatient of sound doctrine; and, 4. That the mystery of iniquity would continue to be developed till it reached its consummation in the Papacy. Apostasy is traced in the decline of the zealous orthodoxy of the Reformation, the rise of Arminianism and Socinianism, and kindred errors, III. The causes of this declension from orthodoxy in Britain are enumerated:—1. Rooted enmity to spiritual things; 2. Spiritual ignorance on the part of men who possess some knowledge, and make a profession of the truth; 3. Pride of heart; 4. Careless security; 5. Love of the world; 6. The influence of Satan; and lastly, Judicial blindness, IV.–VI. Particular reasons are assigned for such defection from the truth:—ignorance of the necessity for the mediation of Christ, want of spiritual views of the excellency of Christ in his person and offices, inexperience of the efficacy of the Spirit, ignorance of the righteousness of God, reluctance to admit the sovereignty of God, and an incapacity to discern the self-evidencing power of the Word, VII. II. Apostasy from the *holiness of the gospel* is next considered theoretically, in reference,—1. To the morals of Romanism, defective because inconsistent with spiritual freedom, founded on human rules and systems, capable of being observed without faith in Christ, and pervaded by the vitiating principle of merit and supererogation; 2. To those who confine the whole of obedience to morality; and 3. To those who pretend to perfection in this life. The causes of this kind of apostasy are mentioned, VIII. Practical apostasy into open profanity and vice is traced to defects in the public teachers of religion; the false appropriation of names and titles, as when men living in sin claim to be "The Church;" evil example in high places; the influence of persecution; want of due watchfulness against national vices; ignorance of the spiritual beauty of religion; the operations of Satan; and the scandal created by the strictest professors of religion through their divisions and inactivity in good works and offices, IX., X. III. Apostasy from *purity of worship* is exhibited, in the neglect of what God has appointed, and by additions which he has not appointed, in the ordinances of the gospel, XI. The danger arising from the prevailing apostasy is declared, and directions are given in order to escape being involved in it, XII., XIII.—ED.

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TO THE READER.

SOME brief account of the occasion and design of the ensuing discourse I judge due unto the reader, that, upon a prospect of them, he may either proceed in its perusal or desist, as he shall see cause.

That the state of religion is at this day deplorable in most parts of the Christian world is acknowledged by all who concern themselves in any thing that is so called; yea, the enormities of some are come to that excess that others publicly complain of them, who, without the countenance of their more bold provocations, would themselves be judged no small part or cause of the evils to be complained of. However, this, on all hands, will, as I suppose, be agreed unto, that among the generality of professed Christians, the glory and power of Christianity are faded and almost utterly lost, though the reasons and causes thereof are not agreed upon; for however some few may please themselves in supposing nothing to be wanting unto a good state of things in religion, but only security in what they are and enjoy, yet the whole world is so evidently filled with the dreadful effects of the lusts of men, and sad tokens of divine displeasure, that all things from above and here below proclaim the degeneracy of our religion, in its profession, from its pristine beauty and glory. Religion is the same that ever it was, only it suffers by them that make profession of it. Whatever disadvantage it falls under in the world, they must at length answer for in whose misbelief and practice it is corrupted. And no man can express a greater enmity unto or malice against the gospel, than he that should assert or maintain that the faith, profession, lives, ways, and walkings of the generality of Christians are a just representation of its truth and holiness. The description which the apostle gives of men in their principles, dispositions, and actings, before there hath been any effectual influence on their minds and lives from the light, power, and grace of the gospel, is much more applicable unto them than any thing that is spoken of the disciples of Christ in the whole book of God: "Foolish are they, and disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another." The way, paths, and footsteps of gospel faith, love, meekness, temperance, self-denial, benignity, humility, zeal, and contempt of the world, in the honours, profits, and pleasures of it, with readiness for the cross, are all [so] overgrown, and almost worn out amongst men, that they can hardly be discerned where they have been. But in their stead the "works of the flesh" have made a broad and open road, that the multitude travel in, which, though it may be right for a season in their own eyes, yet is the way to hell, and goeth down to the chambers of death; for these "works of the flesh are manifest" in the world, not only in their nature, what they are, but in their open perpetration and dismal effects: such are "adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and

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such like," as they are reckoned up by the apostle. How these things have spread themselves over the face of the Christian world, among all sorts of persons, is manifest beyond all contradiction or pretence to the contrary. And that so it should come to pass in the latter times is both expressly and frequently foretold in the Scripture, as in the ensuing discourse will be more fully declared.

Many, indeed, there are who are not given up in the course of their lives unto the open practice of such abominations; and therefore, in that grand defection from the truth and holiness of the gospel which is so prevalent in the world, the grace of God is greatly to be admired, even in the small remainders of piety, sobriety, and modesty, and common usefulness that are yet left among us. But those openly flagitious courses are not the only way whereby men may fall off from, and even renounce, the power, grace, and wisdom of our Lord Jesus Christ. For even of those who will not "run out to the same excess of riot" with other men, the most are so ignorant of the mysteries of the gospel, so negligent or formal in divine worship, so infected with pride, vanity, and love of the world, so regardless of the glory of Christ and honour of the gospel, that it is no easy thing to find Christian religion in the midst of professed Christians, or the power of godliness among them who openly avow the form thereof.

By this means is Christianity brought into so great neglect in the world, that its great and subtle adversary seems encouraged to attempt the ruining of its very foundations, that the name of it should no more be had in remembrance; for wherever religion is taken off from a solid consistency by its power in the lives and minds of men, when it hath no other tenure but an outward, unenlivened profession, and the secular interest of its professors, it will not long abide the shock of that opposition which it is continually exposed unto. And whilst things are in this state, those who seem to have any concernment therein are so engaged in mutual charging one another with being occasions thereof, mostly on such principles of difference in judgment as have no considerable influence thereinto, as that a joint endeavour after proper remedies is utterly neglected.

And there is yet another consideration rendering the present state of Christian religion in the world yet more deplorable. The only principle of evangelical obedience is sacred truth, and our faith therein. That alone is "the doctrine which is according to godliness;" and all acceptable obedience unto God is "the obedience of faith." Whatever men do or pretend unto in a way of duty unto him, whereof the truth of the gospel is not the spring and measure, which is not guided and animated thereby, it is not what God at present requireth, nor what he will eternally reward. Wherefore, although men may, and multitudes do, under a profession of that truth, live in open rebellion against its power, yet the wounds of religion are not incurable nor its stains indelible, whilst the proper remedy is owned and wants only due application. But if this truth itself be corrupted or deserted, if its most glorious mysteries be abused or despised, if its most important doctrines be impeached of error and falsehood, and if the vain imaginations and carnal reasonings of the serpentine wits of men be substituted in their room or exalted above them, what hope is there of a recovery? the breach will grow like the sea, until there be none to heal it. If the fountains of the waters of the sanctuary be poisoned in their first rising, they will not heal the nations unto whom they come. Where the doctrine of truth is corrupted, the hearts of men will not be changed by it nor their lives reformed.

How all this hath come to pass in the apostasy of the Roman church, and what multitudes of professed Christians are carried down the stream of that defection, is acknowledged among us who are called Protestants. How, therein, by various degrees, the corruption of the doctrine of the gospel gave occasion unto the depravation of men's manners on the one hand, and the wickedness of men's lives on

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the other hand, led the way unto, and served to make necessary, a farther perverting of the doctrine itself, until at length it is hard to determine whether the multiplied errors of that church have made the reintroduction of true holiness and evangelical obedience, or the corrupt, worldly conversation of the generality of the members of its communion has rendered the restoration of truth, more difficult and unpracticable in their present station, is in part declared in the ensuing discourses, and deserves yet a more particular and distinct inquiry into. In general, certain it is that as error, with superstition, on the one hand, in the minds of the teachers or guides of the church, and sin, with conformity unto the ways, manners, and course of the present evil world in the body of the people, were mutually assistant unto their joint introduction into the profession and lives of Christians; so having possessed themselves of the visible church-state of many nations, they are so interwoven in their interests as to be mutually assistant to the exclusion of that truth and holiness which they have dispossessed. And whereas, moreover, they have found out the pretence of infallibility, stretched wide enough, in their own apprehensions, to cover, patronize, and justify the most enormous errors and highest inconformity of life unto the gospel, all hopes of their recovery are utterly defeated, but what are placed on the sovereign grace and almighty power of God.

That there is also another endeavour of the same kind, and for the same general end,—namely, to corrupt the doctrine of the gospel,—though in another way, and unto another extreme, vigorously carried on in the world by the Socinians, and those who either absolutely or for the most part comply with them in their pernicious ways, is no less known, nor ought to be much less bewailed; for this endeavour also is attended with many advantages to give it success. The corruption of the doctrine of the gospel in the Roman church, as it sprang out of the ignorance, darkness, superstition, and carnal affections of the minds of men, so it is by the same means preserved. But although those things, in those ages and places where they abounded, gave sufficient and effectual advantage to its gradual introduction, and although the principles of it be now so inlaid with the secular interests of the generality of mankind in most of the nations in Europe as to secure its station and possessions; yet, in that emancipation of reason from under the bond of superstition and tradition, in that liberty of rational inquiry into the true nature and causes of all things, in that refusal to captivate their understandings in religion to the bare authority of men no wiser than themselves, which all pretend unto at present who dare venture on an ordinary converse in the world, it may seem marvellous how it should get ground and enlarge its territories, unless it be among them who are evidently bought off from themselves and from under the conduct of their own minds by some outward advantages, which they look upon as a valuable consideration. The true reasons hereof are inquired into in the ensuing discourse. But this new attempt, despising the baffled aids of superstition and carnal affections, which were in former ages predominant and effectual, takes shelter under a pretence of reason, and the suitableness of what is proposed in it unto the natural light and understandings of men. Whatever there is or is not in this matter of the relation that is between religion and reason, yet this being grown, through the increase of learning and converse, with a decay of the true fear of God, the very idol of this age, whoever will prepare a sacrifice unto it, though it be of the most holy mysteries of the gospel, he shall not fail of good entertainment and applause; and whoever shall refuse to cast incense on its altar shall be sure to be exploded, as one that professeth himself to be a fool, and even a common enemy unto mankind. Tell men that there are some things in religion that are above reason as it is finite and limited, and some things contrary unto it as it is depraved and corrupted, and they will reply (what is true in itself, but wofully abused) that yet their reason is the best, yea,

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only means which they have to judge of what is true or false. The liberty of men's own rational faculties having got the great vogue in the world (as indeed it is that which is most excellent therein of what is merely in and of it), it is fond to expect that it should not meet with a pernicious abuse, as every thing that hath any worth in it hath always done, when advanced unto such a reputation as might render it liable thereunto; for no man will ever adventure to prevail himself[1] of that which others have no respect unto or do despise.

Herein, then, lies the advantage of this sort of men,—the Socinians I mean, and their adherents,—in attempting to corrupt the doctrine of the gospel, and hereon depends all their success therein: First, they get the advantage of the ground in general, by pretending to reduce all men unto right reason, as the just measure and standard of truth. Put in any exceptions unto this proposal, endeavour to affix its bounds and proper measure, offer the consideration of divine revelation in its proper use and place, and you give away the cause among the many, who design at least to come in as common sharers in the reputation that reason hath got above all things in the world. By the confident use of this artifice, and the most absurd application of this principle unto things infinite and the most holy mysteries of divine revelation, have this sort of men, otherwise, for the most part, as weak and insufficient in their reasonings as their predecessors in the like attempts, got the reputation of the most rational handlers of sacred things! And when, being harnessed with this advantage, they proceed to the proposal of their opinions in particular, they have such an interest beforehand in the minds of men by nature, and have things so disposed and prepared for their reception, that it is no wonder if ofttimes they obtain success. For they are all of them designed unto one of these two heads:—first, "That there is no reason why we should believe any thing that reason cannot comprehend; so that we may safely conclude that whatever is above our reason is contrary unto it; and for what is so, it is destructive to the very natural constitution of our souls not to reject:" and, secondly, "That the mind of man is, in its present condition, every way sufficient unto the whole of its duties, both intellectual and moral, with respect unto God, and to answer whatever is required of us." Upon the matter, they pretend only to undertake the patronage of human nature, and the common reason and honesty of mankind, against those imputations of weakness, depravation, and corruption, in things spiritual, wherewith by some it is charged and defamed. And although it be contrary unto the universal experience of the whole world, yet might this design be allowed what commendation men please, so that the defence of nature were not undertaken expressly against the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the redemption that is in his blood, and the whole mystery of the gospel. But whereas it is a part of the depravation of our nature not to discover its own depravations, and all those opinions are suited to give it countenance against what it is not sensible of, and whereof it is not willing to own the charge, it is no wonder if with very many they receive a ready entertainment. And whereas they seem to interest men in that reputation which reason in the things of God hath obtained in the world, and thereby to countenance them in the contempt of others as weak and irrational,—things pleasing to the depraved minds of men,—it is more than probable that they will make a pernicious progress in one degree or another. So doth the subtle enemy of our salvation make his advantage of the disposition, inclination, and state of every age and season. Without his interposition, devotion of old might have been carried on without superstition, and in this age the use of reason might be vindicated without a rejection of the necessity of supernatural illumination and the great truths of the gospel. But the better any thing is, the more noisome it will be when once he hath mixed his poison with it.

[1] In the sense of the French "se prévaloir,"—"to take advantage of."—Ed.

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It were to be wished that the defection from the truth of the gospel complained of were confined unto the instances already mentioned, though in them the event be deplorable among multitudes of professed Christians. But the same, in some measure and degree, is come to pass among Protestants also. Men grow weary of the truths which have been professed ever since the Reformation, yea, of those in particular which gave occasion thereunto, and without which it had never been attempted; for besides that many fall off unto those extremes of error before insisted on, some on the one hand, and some on the other, the reformed religion is by not a few so taken off from its old foundations, so unhinged from those pillars of important truths which it did depend upon, and so sullied by a confused medley of noisome opinions, as that its loss in reputation of stability and usefulness seems almost irreparable. Hence are divisions, debates, and animosities multiplied about the principal articles of our religion, whereby those tongues are divided and hands engaged in mutual intestine conflicts, which all united were few enough to preserve the remainders of the protestant profession from the artifices and power of him who doth not despair once more to impose his yoke on the neck of the whole Christian world; for nothing can more prepare the way of his success than the shaking of the doctrine of the reformed churches from that consistency wherein for so long a time it stood firm and stable against all opposition.

But there is in this matter nothing absolutely new under the sun. No instance can be given of any church or nation in the world, which ever received the profession of the gospel, that did not, sooner or later, either totally or in some considerable degrees, fall off from the doctrine which it reveals and the obedience which it requireth. Men do but deceive themselves who suppose that the purity of religion will be preserved in confessions and canons, whilst some make it their business to corrupt its truth, and few or none make it their business to preserve its power. And, therefore, at this day, on one account or other, the defection is almost catholic; for it is in vain for any to pretend that the present general visible profession of Christianity doth in any tolerable measure answer the original pattern of it in the Scripture, or the first transcript thereof in the primitive believers. And that which, in this degenerate state of things, doth principally exercise the minds of considerate men is, whether there ought to be an immediate endeavour to reduce as many as will or can comply therewith unto the original standard in profession, obedience, and worship, or whether the present posture of things be not so far to be complied withal as to preserve therein the small remainders of religion among the community of Christians, who are not capable of such a reduction. The difference that is in the judgments of men herein is the ground of all those lesser controversies and opinions, which will be composed and have an end put unto them when God shall graciously afford unto us all a fresh revival of evangelical faith, love, and holiness, and, I fear, not before.

Upon some considerations of this state of things in the world, and under fears, perhaps not altogether groundless, that a farther progress will yet be made in this woful declension from the power and purity of evangelical truth, I set myself unto a general inquiry what might be the secret causes and reasons whence it is that all sorts of persons, in all ages, have been so prone to apostatize from the sincere profession of the gospel in faith and obedience, as experience in the success of things manifests them to have been. And, moreover, an occasion was administered unto thoughts of that nature from my engagement in the exposition of the sixth chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, wherein the apostle so eminently describes the nature of total apostasy, with the end of apostates in the righteous judgment of God; for considering the greatness of that sin, and the terror of the Lord with respect thereunto, and not knowing whereunto the daily advance of impiety, profaneness, and abominable lusts, with ignorance, error, and superstition,

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might at length arrive, thoughtfulness of what might be required at the last day of myself, though cast in a mean and obscure condition in the world, did not a little exercise my mind. The glory of God, the honour of Christ and the gospel, and the eternal welfare of the souls of men, being eminently concerned, I knew not how he could have the least satisfaction in the truth and reality of his own Christianity who was not greatly affected with, and did not really mourn for, their suffering in this woful apostasy. What I have attained unto in that kind I have no reason to declare, but hope I may say, without the offence of any, that as I verily believe neither my prayers nor tears have been proportionable unto the causes of them in this matter, so I can and will say that they have been real and sincere.

I was not ignorant of the weakness and impertinency of all thoughts that a person of my mean condition in the world, disadvantaged by all imaginable circumstances that might prejudice the most sincere endeavours, should attempt any thing with respect unto the relief of nations or national churches, which yet are not without the verge of this fatal evil. To mourn for them in secret, to labour in prayers and supplications for a more plentiful effusion of the Spirit of Christ upon them for their good, are things which, although they may despise, yet God will accept in and from the meanest of them that call on his name in sincerity. Unto whom other opportunities and advantages are granted, from them other things will be required; and it is, no doubt, a great account they have to give who are admitted and esteemed as those whose place and duty it is to stem the current of overflowing impiety and profaneness, and effectually to apply the sovereign remedies of all those evils unto the souls and consciences of men. Sad will it be for them under whose hand this breach shall be, if they endeavour not to prevent it with their utmost diligence, and the open hazard of all their earthly concerns. A learned writer of the church of England affirms, "That there were two no small sins of noisome hypocrisy that he had espied among others;—the one, an opinion that there can be no fit matter of martyrdom in a state authorizing the true profession of that religion which among many we like best, and, left unto ourselves, would make choice of; the other, which in part feeds this, a persuasion that mere errors in doctrine or opinion are more pernicious than affected indulgence to lewd practices, or continuance in sinful courses, or open breaches of God's commandments." And after he had declared that "ministers of the gospel may deny Christ, or manifest their being ashamed of the gospel, by not opposing his word as they ought unto the sins of men," he adds, "That any age, since Christian religion was first propagated, hath wanted store of martyrs, is more to be attributed unto the negligence, ignorance, and hypocrisy, or want of courage in Christ's ambassadors, or appointed pastors, than unto the sincerity, mildness, or fidelity of the flock, especially of the bell-wethers or chief ringleaders," Jac. tom. i. b. 4. c. 4; with much more to the same purpose, which well deserve some men's consideration before all things of this nature be too late.

But there is a duty of trading with a single talent; and if there be a ready mind, it is accepted according to what a man hath, and not according to what he hath not. And this alone hath made me adventure the proposal of my thoughts about the nature, causes, and occasions of the present defection from the gospel and decay of holiness, with the means of preservation from its infection, and prevention of its prevalency in private persons; for it is to no purpose to shut up all endeavours under fruitless complaints, nor yet to attempt an opposition unto effects whose causes are not well known and considered. Wherefore the investigation and declaration of the causes of this evil are the principal subject of the ensuing discourses. And if I have attained but thus much, that persons of more understanding and abilities to find out the hidden springs of the inundation of sin and errors in the

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Christian world, and who have more advantages to improve their discoveries unto public good, shall be hereby excited to undertake so necessary a work and duty, I shall esteem myself to have received a full reward.

There is one thing yet whereof I must advise those readers which are pleased to concern themselves in any writings of mine. The publishing of this exposition of some verses of the sixth chapter of the Epistle unto the Hebrews may have an appearance of my deserting that continued exposition of the whole epistle which I had designed. But as I know not what I may attain unto in the very near approach of that season wherein I must lay down this tabernacle, and the daily warning which, through many infirmities, I have thereof, so I am resolved whilst I live to proceed in that work as God shall enable, and other present necessary duties will allow. And the sole reason, added unto the seasonableness, as I supposed, of this discourse, why this part of the Exposition is singly proposed unto public view, was because the thoughts which arose thereon were drawn forth into such a length as would have been too great a digression from the context and design of the apostle.

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THE NATURE AND CAUSES OF APOSTASY FROM THE GOSPEL.

CHAPTER I.

The nature of apostasy from the gospel declared, in an exposition of Heb. vi. 4–6.

INTENDING an inquiry into the nature, causes, and occasions of the present defection that is in the world from the truth, holiness, and worship of the gospel, I shall lay the foundation of my whole discourse in an exposition of that passage in the Epistle of Paul the apostle unto the Hebrews, wherein he gives an account both of the nature of apostasy and of the punishment due unto apostates; for as this will lead us naturally unto what is designed, so an endeavour to free the context from the difficulties wherewith it is generally supposed to be attended, and to explain the mind of the Holy Ghost therein, may be neither unacceptable nor unuseful. And this is chap. vi. 4–6, whose words are these that follow:—

Ἀδύνατον γὰρ τοὺς ἅπαξ φωτισθέντας, γευσαμένους τε τῆς δωρεᾶς τῆς ἐπουρανίου, καὶ μετόχους γενηθέντας Πνεύματος ἁγίου, καὶ καλὸν γευσαμένους Θεοῦ ῥῆμα, δυνάμεις τε μέλλοντος αἰῶνος, καὶ παραπεσόντας, πάλιν ἀνακαινίζειν εἰς μετάνοιαν, ἀνασταυροῦντας ἑαυτοῖς τὸν Υἱὸν τοῦ Θεοῦ καὶ παραδειγματίζοντας.

Ἀδύνατον γάρ. "Impossibile enim," that is, "est;"—"It is impossible." Syr., אֲבָל לָא מְשַׁכְּחִין,—"But they cannot." This respects the power of the persons themselves, and not the event of things; it may be not improperly as to the sense. Beza and Erasmus, "Fieri non potest,"—"It cannot be;" the same with "impossible." But the use of the word *ἀδύνατον* in the New Testament, which signifies sometimes only what is very difficult, not what is absolutely denied, makes it useful to retain the same word, as in our translation, "For it is impossible."

Τοὺς ἅπαξ φωτισθέντας. הָנוֹן דְּחָדָא זְבַן לְמַעְמוּדִיתָא נְחֵתוּ;—"Those who one time," or "once descended unto baptism;" of which interpretation we must speak afterward. All others, "Qui semel fuerint illu-

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minati;"—"Who were once enlightened." Only the Ethiopic follows the Syriac. Some read "illustrati" to the same purpose.

Γευσαμένους τε τῆς δωρεᾶς τῆς ἐπουρανίου. Vulg. Lat., "Gustaverant etiam donum cœleste;" "etiam," for "et." Others express the article by the pronoun, by reason of its reduplication: "Et gustaverint donum illud cœleste;"—"And have tasted of that heavenly gift." Syr., "The gift that is from heaven." And this the emphasis in the original seems to require: "And have tasted of that heavenly gift."

Καὶ μετόχους γενηθέντας Πνεύματος ἁγίου. "Et participes facti sunt Spiritus Sancti," Vulg. Lat.;—"And are made partakers of the Holy Ghost." All others, "facti fuerint," "have been" made partakers of the Holy Ghost. Syr., רוּחָא דְקוּדְשָׁא,—"The Spirit of holiness."

Καὶ καλὸν γευσαμένους Θεοῦ ῥῆμα. Vulg. Lat., "Et gustaverunt nihilominus bonum Dei verbum." Rhem., "Have moreover tasted the good word of God." But "moreover" doth not express "nihilominus." [It must be rendered,] "And have notwithstanding," etc., which hath no place here. Καλὸν ῥῆμα,—"verbum pulchrum."

Δυνάμεις τε μέλλοντος αἰῶνος. "Virtutesque seculi futuri." Syr., חֵילָא,—"virtutem," the "power." Vulg., "seculi venturi." We cannot in our language distinguish between "futurum" and "venturum," and so render it "the world to come."

Καὶ παραπεσόντας. Vulg., "Et prolapsi sunt." Rhem., "And are fallen." Others, "Si prolabantur," which the sense requires; "If they fall," that is, "away," as our translation, properly. Syr., דְּיֶחֱטֵי, "That sin again,"—somewhat dangerously, for it is one kind of sinning only that is included and expressed.

Πάλιν ἀνακαινίζειν εἰς μετάνοιαν. Vulg., "Rursus renovari ad pœnitentiam,"—"To be renewed again to repentance," rendering the active verb passively. So Beza also, "Ut denuo renoventur ad resipiscentiam;"—"That they should again be renewed to repentance." The word is active as rendered by ours, "To renew them again to repentance."

Ἀνασταυροῦντας ἑαυτοῖς τὸν Υἱὸν τοῦ Θεοῦ. "Rursum crucifigentes sibimetipsis Filium Dei." Καὶ παραδειγματίζοντας. Vulg., "Et ostentui habentes." Rhem., "And making him a mockery." Erasmus, "Ludibrio habentes." Beza, "Ignominiæ exponentes." One of late, "Ad exemplum Judæorum excruciant;"—"Torment him as did the Jews."

"For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away," (for any) "to renew

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them again to repentance; seeing they crucify again to themselves the Son of God, and put him to open shame" (or treat him ignominiously.)

That this passage in our apostle's discourse hath been looked upon as accompanied with great difficulties is known to all, and many have the differences been about its interpretation; for both doctrinally and practically, sundry have here stumbled and miscarried. It is almost generally agreed upon that from these words, and the colourable but indeed perverse interpretation and application made of them by some in the primitive times, occasioned by the then present circumstances of things, to be mentioned afterwards, the Latin church was so backward in receiving the epistle itself, that it had not absolutely prevailed therein in the days of Jerome, as we have elsewhere declared. Wherefore it is necessary that we should a little inquire into the occasion of the great contests which have been in the church, almost in all ages, about the sense of this place.

It is known that the primitive church, according to its duty, was carefully watchful about the holiness and upright walking of all that were admitted into the society and fellowship of it. Hence, upon every known and visible failing, they required an open repentance from the offenders before they would admit them unto a participation of the sacred mysteries. But upon flagitious and scandalous crimes, such as murder, adultery, or idolatry, in many churches they would never admit those who had been guilty of them into their communion any more. Their greatest and most signal trial was with respect unto them who, through fear of death, complied with the Gentiles in their idolatrous worship in the time of persecution; for they had fixed no certain general rule whereby they should unanimously proceed, but every church exercised severity or lenity according as they saw cause, upon the circumstances of particular instances. Hence Cyprian, in his banishment, would not positively determine concerning those of the church in Carthage who had so sinned and fallen, but deferred his thoughts until his return, when he resolved to advise with the whole church, and settle all things according to the counsel that should be agreed on amongst them. Yea, many of his epistles are on this subject peculiarly: and in them all, if compared together, it is evident that there was no rule agreed upon herein; nor was he himself well resolved in his own mind, though strictly on all occasions opposing Novatianus; wherein it had been well if his arguments had answered his zeal. Before this, the church of Rome was esteemed in particular more remiss in their discipline, and more free than other churches in their re-admission unto communion of notorious offenders. Hence Tertullian, in his book de Pœnitentia, reflects on Zephyrinus, the bishop of Rome, that he

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had "admitted adulterers unto repentance, and thereby unto the communion of the church." But that church proceeding in her lenity, and every day enlarging her charity, Novatus and Novatianus, taking offence thereat, advanced an opinion in the contrary extreme: for they denied all hope of church pardon or of a return unto ecclesiastical communion unto them who had fallen into open sin after baptism; and, in especial, peremptorily excluded all persons whatsoever who had outwardly complied with idolatrous worship in time of persecution, without respect unto any distinguishing circumstances; yea, they seem to have excluded them from all expectation of forgiveness from God himself. But their followers, terrified with the uncharitableness and horror of this persuasion, tempered it so far as that, leaving all persons absolutely to the mercy of God upon their repentance, they only denied such as we mentioned before a re-admission unto church communion, as Acesius speaks expressly in Socrates, lib. i. cap. 7. Now, this opinion they endeavoured to confirm, as from the nature and use of baptism, which was not to be reiterated,—whereon they judged that no pardon was to be granted unto them who fell into those sins which they lived in before, and were cleansed from at their baptism,—so principally from this place of our apostle, wherein they thought their whole opinion was taught and confirmed. And so usually doth it fall out, very unhappily, with men who think they clearly see some peculiar opinion or persuasion in some *singular text* of Scripture,[1] and will not bring their interpretation of it unto the analogy of faith, whereby they might see how contrary it is to the whole design and current of the word in other places. But the church of Rome, on the other side, though judging rightly, from other directions given in the Scripture, that the Novatians transgressed the rule of charity and gospel discipline in their severities, yet, as it should seem, and is very probable, knew not how to answer the objection from this place of our apostle. Therefore did they rather choose for a season to suspend their assent unto the authority of the whole epistle than to prejudice the church by its admission. And well was it that some learned men afterward, by their sober inter-

[1] "Solenne est hæreticis alicujus capituli ancipitis occasione adversus exercitum sententiarum Instrumenti totius armari."—Tert. de Pudicit. "Utique æquum, incerta de certis, obscura de manifestis præjudicari, ut ne inter discordiam certorum et incertorum, manifestorum et obscurorum, fides dissipetur."—Id. de Resur. *Ἅπαντα ὀρθὰ ἐνώπιον τῶν συνιέντων, φησὶ ἡ γραφὴ, τοῦτ' ἔστι, τῶν ὅσοι ὑπὲρ αὐτοῦ σαφηνισθεῖσαν τῶν γραφῶν ἐξήγησιν κατὰ τὸν ἐκκλησιαστικὸν κανόνα ἐκδεχόμενοι διασώζουσι, κανὼν δὲ ἐκκλησιαστικὸς ἡ συνῳδία καὶ συμφωνία νόμου τε καὶ προφητῶν τῇ τὴν τοῦ κυρίου παρουσίαν παραδιδομένῃ διαθήκῃ.* —Clem. Alex., Stromat. vi. *Εὖ οἶδα ὅτι ῥητά τινα παραλήψονται τῆς γραφῆς οἱ καὶ ταῦτα βουλόμενοι τολμᾷν φάσκειν ἀπὸ Θεοῦ γεγονέναι, μὴ δυνάμενοι ἓν ὕφος ἀποδεῖξαι τῆς γραφῆς αἰτιωμένης μὲν τοὺς ἁμαρτάνοντας, ἀποδεχομένης δὲ τοὺς εὖ πράττοντας, καὶ οὐδὲν ἧττον κἀκεῖνα λεγούσης ἅτινα περισπᾷν δοκεῖ, ὀλίγα ὄντα, τοὺς ἀμαθῶς τὰ θεῖα γράμματα ἀναγινώσκοντας.* —Origen. adv. Cels. lib. vi.

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pretations of the words, plainly evinced that no countenance was given in them unto the errors of the Novatians; for without this it is much to be feared that some would have preferred their interest in their present controversy before the authority of it: which would, in the issue, have proved ruinous to the truth itself; for the epistle, being designed of God unto the common edification of the church, would have at length prevailed, whatever sense men, through their prejudices and ignorance, should put upon any passages of it. But this controversy is long since buried, the generality of the churches in the world being sufficiently remote from that which was truly the mistake of the Novatians; yea, the most of them do bear peaceably in their communion, without the least exercise of gospel discipline towards them, such persons as concerning whom the dispute was of old, whether they should ever in this world be admitted into the communion of the church, although upon their open and professed repentance. We shall not therefore at present need to labour in this controversy.

But the sense of these words hath been the subject of great contests on other occasions also; for some do suppose and contend that they are *real and true believers* who are deciphered by the apostle, and that their character is given us in and by sundry inseparable adjuncts and properties of such persons. Hence they conclude that such believers may totally and finally fall from grace, and perish eternally; yea, it is evident that this hypothesis of the final apostasy of true believers is that which influenceth their minds and judgments to suppose that such are here intended. Wherefore others who will not admit that, according to the tenor of the covenant of grace in Christ Jesus, true believers can perish everlastingly, do say that either they are not here intended, or if they are, that the words are only comminatory, wherein, although the consequence in them in a way of arguing be true, namely, that on the supposition laid down the inference is certain, yet the supposition is not asserted in order unto a certain consequent, whence it should follow that true believers might so really fall away and absolutely perish. And these things have been the matter of many contests among learned men.

Again; there have been sundry mistakes in the *practical application* of the intention of these words unto the consciences of men, mostly made by themselves who are concerned; for whereas, by reason of sin, they have been surprised with terrors and troubles of conscience, they have withal, in their darkness and distress, supposed themselves to be fallen into the condition here described by our apostle, and consequently to be irrecoverably lost. And these apprehensions usually befall men on two occasions; for some having been

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overtaken with some *great actual sin* against the second table, after they have made a profession of the gospel, and having their consciences harassed with a sense of their guilt (as it will fall out where men are not greatly hardened through the deceitfulness of sin), they judge that they are fallen under the sentence denounced in this Scripture against such sinners, as they suppose themselves to be, whereby their state is irrecoverable. Others do make the same judgment of themselves, because they have fallen from that constant compliance with their convictions which formerly led them unto a strict performance of duties, and this in some course of long continuance.

Now, whereas it is certain that the apostle in this discourse gives no countenance unto that severity of the Novatians whereby they excluded offenders everlastingly from the peace and communion of the church; nor to the final apostasy of true believers, which he testifieth against in this very chapter, in compliance with innumerable other testimonies of Scripture to the same purpose; nor doth he teach any thing whereby the conscience of any sinner who desires to return to God and to find acceptance with him should be discouraged or disheartened; we must attend unto the exposition of the words in the first place, so as not to break in upon the boundaries of other truths, nor transgress against the analogy of faith. And we shall find that this whole discourse, compared with other scriptures, and freed from the prejudices that men have brought unto it, is both remote from administering any just occasion to the mistakes before mentioned, and is a needful, wholesome commination, duly to be considered by all professors of the gospel.

In the words we consider,—1. The connection of them unto those foregoing, intimating the occasion of the introduction of this whole discourse. 2. The subject described in them, or the persons spoken of, under sundry qualifications, which may be inquired into jointly and severally. 3. What is supposed concerning them. 4. What is affirmed of them on that supposition.

1. The connection of the words is included in the causal conjunction, γάρ, "for." It respects the introduction of a reason for what had been before discoursed, as also of the limitation which the apostle added expressly unto his purpose of making a progress in their farther instruction, "If God permit." And he doth not herein express his judgment that they to whom he wrote were such as he describes, for he afterward declares that he "hoped better things" concerning them; only, it was necessary to give them this caution, that they might take due care not to be such. And whereas he had manifested that they were slow as to the making of a progress in knowledge and a suitable practice, he lets them here know the danger that there was in continuing in that slothful condition; for not to proceed in the ways

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of the gospel and obedience thereunto is an untoward entrance into a total relinquishment of the one and the other. That therefore they might be acquainted with the danger hereof, and be stirred up to avoid that danger, he gives them an account of the miserable condition of those who, after a profession of the gospel, beginning at a *non-proficiency* under it, do end in *apostasy* from it. And we may see that the severest comminations are not only useful in the preaching of the gospel, but exceeding necessary, towards persons that are observed to be slothful in their profession.

2. The description of the persons that are the subject spoken of is given in *five instances* of the evangelical privileges whereof they were made partakers; notwithstanding all which, and against their obliging efficacy to the contrary, it is supposed that they may wholly desert the gospel itself. And some things we may observe concerning this description of them in general; as,—(1.) The apostle, designing to express the fearful state and judgment of these persons, describes them by such things as may fully evidence it to be, as *unavoidable*, so *righteous* and equal. Those things must be some eminent privileges and advantages, whereof they were made partakers by the gospel. These, being despised in their apostasy, do proclaim their destruction from God to be rightly deserved. (2.) That all these privileges do consist in certain especial operations of the Holy Ghost, which were peculiar unto the dispensation of the gospel, such as they neither were nor could be made partakers of in their Judaism; for the Spirit in this sense was not received by "the works of the law, but by the hearing of faith," Gal. iii. 2. And this was a testimony unto them that they were delivered from the bondage of the law, namely, by a participation of that Spirit which was the great privilege of the gospel. (3.) Here is no express mention of any covenant grace or mercy in them or towards them, nor of any duty of faith or obedience which they had performed. Nothing of justification, sanctification, or adoption, is expressly assigned unto them. Afterwards, when he comes to declare his hope and persuasion concerning these Hebrews, that they were not such as those whom he had before described, nor such as would so fall away unto perdition, he doth it upon three grounds, whereon they were differenced from them; as,—[1.] That they had *such things as did accompany salvation*,—that is, such as salvation is inseparable from. None of these things, therefore, had he ascribed unto those whom he describeth in this place; for if he had so done, they would not have been unto him an argument and evidence of a contrary end, that these should not fall away and perish as well as those. Wherefore he ascribes nothing to these here in the text that doth peculiarly "accompany salvation," verse 9. [2.] He describes them by their *duties of obedi-*

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ence and fruits of faith. This was their "work and labour of love" towards the name of God, verse 10. And hereby also doth he difference them from these in the text, concerning whom he supposeth that they may perish eternally, which these fruits of saving faith and sincere love cannot do. [3.] He adds, that in the preservation of those there mentioned *the faithfulness of God* was concerned: "God is not unrighteous to forget." For they were such he intended as were interested in the covenant of grace, with respect whereunto alone there is any engagement on the faithfulness or righteousness of God to preserve men from apostasy and ruin; and there is so with an equal respect unto all who are so taken into that covenant. But of these in the text he supposeth no such thing, and thereupon doth not intimate that either the righteousness or faithfulness of God was any way engaged for their preservation, but rather the contrary. This whole description, therefore, refers unto some especial gospel privileges, which professors in those days were promiscuously made partakers of; and what they were in particular we must in the next place inquire.

The FIRST thing in the description is, that they were ἅπαξ φωτισθέντες, "once enlightened." Saith the Syriac translation, as we observed, "once baptized." It is very certain that, early in the church, baptism was called φωτισμός, "illumination;" and φωτίζειν, to "enlighten," was used for to "baptize." And the set times wherein they solemnly administered that ordinance were called ἡμέραι τῶν φώτων, "the days of light." Hereunto the Syriac interpreter seems to have had respect; and the word ἅπαξ, "once," may give countenance hereunto. Baptism was once only to be celebrated, according to the constant faith of the church in all ages. And they called baptism "illumination," because it being one ordinance of the initiation of persons into a participation of all the mysteries of the church, they were thereby translated out of the kingdom of darkness into that of light and grace. And it seems to give farther countenance hereunto in that baptism really was the beginning and foundation of a participation of all the other spiritual privileges that are mentioned afterwards; for it was usual in those times, that, upon the baptizing of persons, the Holy Ghost came upon them, and endowed them with extraordinary gifts, peculiar to the days of the gospel,[1] as we have showed in our consideration of the order between baptism and imposition of hands. And this opinion hath so much of probability in it, that, having nothing therewithal unsuited unto the analogy of faith or design of the place, I should embrace it, if the word itself, as here used, did not require another interpretation; for it was a good while after the writing of this epistle and all other parts of the New Testament, at least an age or two, if not more, before this word

[1] Apostles?—ED.

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was used mystically to express baptism. In the whole Scripture it hath another sense, denoting an inward operation of the Spirit, and not the outward administration of an ordinance. And it is too much boldness to take a word in a peculiar sense in one single place, diverse from its proper signification and constant use, if there be no circumstances in the text forcing us thereunto, as here are not. And for the word ἅπαξ, "once," it is not to be restrained unto this particular, but refers equally unto all the instances that follow, signifying no more but that those mentioned were really and truly partakers of them.

Φωτίζομαι is to give light or knowledge by teaching, the same with הוֹרָה, which is therefore so translated ofttimes by the Greeks; as by Aquila, Exod. iv. 12, Ps. cxix. 33, Prov. iv. 4, Isa. xxvii. 11, as Drusius observes. And it is so by the LXX., Judges xiii. 8, 2 Kings xii. 2, xvii. 27. Our apostle useth it for to "make manifest,"—that is, to "bring to light," 1 Cor. iv. 5; 2 Tim. i. 10. And the meaning of it, John i. 9, where we render it "lighteth," is to teach. And φωτισμός is knowledge upon instruction: 2 Cor. iv. 4, Εἰς τὸ μὴ αὐγάσαι αὐτοῖς τὸν φωτισμὸν τοῦ εὐαγγελίου·—"That the light of the gospel should not shine into them,"—that is, the knowledge of it. So verse 6, Πρὸς φωτισμὸν τῆς γνώσεως·—"The light of the knowledge." Wherefore, to be "enlightened" in this place is to be instructed in the doctrine of the gospel, so as to have a spiritual apprehension thereof; and this is so termed on a double account:—

1. Of the *objects*, or the things known or apprehended; for "life and immortality are brought to light through the gospel," 2 Tim. i. 10. Hence it is called "light,"—"The inheritance of the saints in light." And the state which men are thereby brought into is so called in opposition to the darkness that is in the world without it, 1 Pet. ii. 9. The world without the gospel is the kingdom of Satan: Ὁ κόσμος ὅλος ἐν τῷ πονηρῷ κεῖται, 1 John v. 19. The whole of the world, and all that belongs unto it, in distinction from and opposition unto the new creation, is under the power of the wicked one, the prince of the power of darkness, and so is full of darkness. It is τόπος αὐχμηρός, 2 Pet. i. 19,—"a dark place," wherein ignorance, folly, errors, and superstition do dwell and reign. By the power and efficacy of this darkness are men kept at a distance from God, and know not whither they go. This is called "walking in darkness," 1 John i. 6, whereunto "walking in the light,"—that is, the knowledge of God in Christ by the gospel,—is opposed, verse 7. On this account is our instruction in the knowledge of the gospel called "illumination," because itself is light.

2. On the account of the *subject*, or the mind itself, whereby the gospel is apprehended; for the knowledge which is received thereby expels that darkness, ignorance, and confusion which the mind be-

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fore was filled and possessed withal. The knowledge, I say, of the doctrines of the gospel concerning the person of Christ, of God's being in him reconciling the world to himself, of his offices, work, and mediation, and the like heads of divine revelation, doth set up a spiritual light in the minds of men, enabling them to discern what before was utterly hid from them, whilst alienated from the life of God through their ignorance. Of this light and knowledge there are several degrees, according to the means of instruction which men do enjoy, the capacity they have to receive it, and the diligence they use to that purpose; but a competent measure of the knowledge of the fundamental and most material principles or doctrines of the gospel is required unto all that may thence be said to be illuminated, —that is, freed from the darkness and ignorance they once lived in, 2 Pet. i. 19–21.

This is the first property whereby the persons intended are described: they are such as were illuminated by the instruction they had received in the doctrines of the gospel, and the impression made thereby on their minds by the Holy Ghost; for this is a common work of his, and is here so reckoned. And the apostle would have us know that,—

I. *It is a great mercy, a great privilege, to be enlightened with the doctrine of the gospel by the effectual working of the Holy Ghost.* But,—

II. *It is such a privilege as may be lost, and end in the aggravation of the sin, and condemnation of those who were made partakers of it.* And,—

III. *Where there is a total neglect of the due improvement of this privilege and mercy, the condition of such persons is hazardous, as inclining towards apostasy.*

Thus much lies open and manifest in the text. But that we may more particularly discover the nature of this first part of the character of apostates, for their sakes who may look after their own concernment therein, we may yet a little more distinctly express the nature of that illumination and knowledge which is here ascribed unto them; and how it is lost in apostasy will afterward appear. And,—

1. There is a knowledge of spiritual things that is purely *natural* and *disciplinary*, attainable and attained without any especial aid or assistance of the Holy Ghost. As this is evident in common experience, so especially among such as, casting themselves on the study of spiritual things, are yet utter strangers unto all spiritual gifts. Some knowledge of the Scripture and the things contained in it is attainable at the same rate of pains and study with that of any other art or science.

2. The *illumination* intended, being a gift of the Holy Ghost,

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differs from and is exalted above this knowledge that is purely natural; for it makes nearer approaches unto the light of spiritual things in their own nature than the other doth. Notwithstanding the utmost improvement of scientifical notions that are purely natural, the things of the gospel, in their own nature, are not only unsuited unto the wills and affections of persons endued with them, but are really foolishness unto their minds. And as unto that goodness and excellency which give desirableness unto spiritual things, this knowledge discovers so little of them that most men hate the things which they profess to believe. But this spiritual illumination gives the mind some satisfaction, with delight and joy in the things that are known. By that beam whereby it shines into darkness, although it be not fully comprehended, yet it represents the way of the gospel as a "way of righteousness," 2 Pet. ii. 21, which reflects a peculiar regard of it on the mind.

Moreover, the knowledge that is merely natural hath little or no power upon the soul, either to keep it from sin or to constrain it to obedience. There is not a more secure and profligate generation of sinners in the world than those who are under the sole conduct of it. But the illumination here intended is attended with efficacy, so as that it doth effectually press in the conscience and whole soul unto an abstinence from sin and the performance of all known duties. Hence persons under the power of it and its convictions do ofttimes walk blamelessly and uprightly in the world, so as not with the other to contribute unto the contempt of Christianity. Besides, there is such an alliance between spiritual gifts, that where any one of them doth reside, it hath assuredly others accompanying of it, or one way or other belonging unto its train; as is manifest in this place. Even a single talent is made up of many pounds. But the light and knowledge which is of a mere natural acquirement is solitary, destitute of the society and countenance of any spiritual gift whatever. And these things are exemplified unto common observation every day.

3. There is a saving, sanctifying light and knowledge which this spiritual illumination riseth not up unto; for though it transiently affect the mind with some glances of the beauty, glory, and excellency of spiritual things, yet it doth not give that direct, steady, intuitive insight into them which is obtained by grace. See 2 Cor. iii. 18, iv. 6. Neither doth it renew, change, or transform the soul into a conformity unto the things known, by planting of them in the will and affections, as a gracious, saving light doth, 2 Cor. iii. 18; Rom. vi. 17, xii. 2.

These things I judged necessary to be added, to clear the nature of the first character of apostates.

The SECOND thing asserted in the description of them is, that they

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have "tasted of the heavenly gift,"—γευσαμένους τε τῆς δωρεᾶς τῆς ἐπουρανίου. The doubling of the article gives emphasis to the expression. And we must inquire,—1. What is meant by the "heavenly gift;" and, 2. What by "tasting" of it.

1. The gift of God, δωρεά, is either δόσις, "donatio," or δώρημα, "donum." Sometimes it is taken for the grant or giving itself, and sometimes for the thing given. In the first sense it is used, 2 Cor. ix. 15, "Thanks be unto God ἐπὶ τῇ ἀνεκδιηγήτῳ αὐτοῦ δωρεᾷ,"—for his gift that cannot be declared;" that is, fully or sufficiently. Now this gift was his grant of a free, charitable, and bountiful spirit to the Corinthians in ministering unto the poor saints. The grant hereof is called "God's gift." So is the gift of Christ used also: Eph. iv. 7, "According to the measure of the gift of Christ;" that is, "According as he is pleased to give and grant of the fruits of the Spirit unto men." See Rom. v. 15–17; Eph. iii. 7. Sometimes it is taken for the thing given, properly δῶρον or δώρημα, as James i. 17. So it is used John iv. 10, "If thou knewest the gift of God," τὴν δωρεὰν τοῦ Θεοῦ, "The gift of God,"—that is, the thing given by him, or to be given by him. It is, as many judge, the person of Christ himself which in that place is intended; but the context makes it plain that it is the Holy Ghost, for he is that "living water" which the Lord Jesus in that place promiseth to bestow. And, so far as I can observe, δωρεά, the "gift," with respect unto God, as denoting the thing given, is nowhere used but only to signify the Holy Ghost; and if it be so, the sense of this place is determined, Acts ii. 38, "Ye shall receive τὴν δωρεὰν τοῦ ἁγίου Πνεύματος,—the gift of the Holy Ghost;" not that which he gives, but that which he is. Chap. viii. 20, "Thou hast thought δωρεὰν τοῦ Θεοῦ,—that the gift of God may be purchased with money;" that is, the power of the Holy Ghost in miraculous operations. So expressly chap. x. 45, xi. 17. Elsewhere δωρεά, so far as I can observe, when respecting God, doth not signify the thing given, but the grant itself. The Holy Spirit is signally the gift of God under the new testament.

And he is said to be ἐπουράνιος, "heavenly," or from heaven. This may have respect unto his work and effect,—they are heavenly, as opposed to carnal and earthly; but principally it regards his mission by Christ, after his ascension into heaven: Acts ii. 33, being exalted, and having received the promise of the Father, he sent the Spirit. The promise of him was, that he should be sent from heaven, or מִמָּעַל, "from above," as God is said to be above, which is the same with "heavenly," Deut. iv. 39; 2 Chron. vi. 23; Job xxxi. 28; Isa. xxxii. 15, מִמָּרוֹם, and chap. xxiv. 18. When he came upon the Lord Christ to anoint him for his work, "the heavens were opened," and he came from above, Matt. iii. 16. So Acts ii. 2, at his first

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coming on the apostles, there came "a sound from heaven." Hence he is said to be ἀποσταλείς ἀπ' οὐρανοῦ,—that is, to be ἡ δωρεὰ τοῦ Θεοῦ, ἡ ἐπουράνιος, "sent from heaven," 1 Pet. i. 12. Wherefore, although he may be said to be "heavenly" upon other accounts also, which therefore are not absolutely to be excluded, yet his being sent from heaven by Christ, after his ascension thither and exaltation there, is principally here regarded. He therefore is this ἡ δωρεὰ ἡ ἐπουράνιος, the "heavenly gift" here intended, though not absolutely, but with respect unto an especial work.

That which riseth up against this interpretation is, that the Holy Ghost is expressly mentioned in the next clause: "And were made partakers of the Holy Ghost." It is not therefore probable that he should be here also intended.

Ans. (1.) It is ordinary to have the same thing twice expressed, in various words, to quicken the sense of them; and it is necessary it should be so, when there are divers respects unto the same thing, as there are in this place.

(2.) The following clause may be exegetical of this, declaring more fully and plainly what is here intended; which is usual also in the Scripture: so that nothing is cogent from this consideration to disprove an interpretation so suited to the sense of the place, and which the constant use of the word makes necessary to be embraced. But,—

(3.) The Holy Ghost is here mentioned as the great gift of the gospel times, as coming down from heaven, not absolutely, not as unto his person, but with respect unto an especial work,—namely, the change of the whole state of religious worship in the church of God,—whereas we shall see in the next words, he is spoken of only with respect unto external actual operations. But he was the great, the promised heavenly gift, to be bestowed under the new testament, by whom God would institute and ordain a new way and new rites of worship, upon the revelation of himself and his will in Christ. Unto him was committed the reformation of all things in the church, whose time was now come, chap. ix. 10. The Lord Christ, when he ascended into heaven, left all things standing and continuing in religious worship as they had done from the days of Moses, though he had virtually put an end unto it [the Mosaic dispensation]; and he commanded his disciples that they should attempt no alteration therein until the Holy Ghost were sent from heaven to enable them thereunto, Acts i. 4, 5. But when he came as the great gift of God, promised under the new testament, he removes all the carnal worship and ordinances of Moses, and that by the full revelation of the accomplishment of all that was signified by them, and appoints the new, holy, spiritual worship of the gospel, that was to succeed in their room.

The Spirit of God, therefore, as bestowed for the introduction

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of the new gospel state in truth and worship, is the "heavenly gift" here intended. Thus our apostle warneth these Hebrews that they "turn not away from him who speaketh from heaven," chap. xii. 25,—that is, from Jesus Christ speaking in the dispensation of the gospel by the "Holy Ghost sent down from heaven." And there is an antithesis included herein between the law and the gospel, the former being given on earth, the latter being immediately from heaven. God, in giving of the law, made use of the ministry of angels, and that on the earth; but he gave the gospel church-state by that Spirit which, although he worketh in men on earth, and is said in every act or work to be sent from heaven, yet is he still in heaven, and always speaketh from thence, as our Saviour said of himself with respect unto his divine nature, John iii. 13.

2. We may inquire what it is to "taste" of this heavenly gift. The expression of "tasting" is metaphorical, and signifies no more but to make a trial or experiment; for so we do by tasting naturally and properly of that which is tendered unto us to eat. We taste such things by the sense given us to discern our food, and then either receive or refuse them, as we find occasion. It doth not therefore include eating, much less digestion and turning into nourishment of what is so tasted; for its nature being only thereby discerned, it may be refused, yea, though we like its relish and savour, upon some other consideration. Some have observed, that "to taste is as much as to eat; as 2 Sam. iii. 35, 'I will not taste bread, or ought else.'" But the meaning is, "I will not so much as taste it," whence it was impossible he should eat it. And when Jonathan says that he only tasted a little of the honey, 1 Sam. xiv. 29, it was an excuse and extenuation of what he had done. But it is unquestionably used for some kind of experience of the nature of things: Prov. xxxi. 18, טָעֲמָה כִּי טוֹב סַחְרָהּ,—"She tasteth that her merchandise is good," or hath experience of it, from its increase. Ps. xxxiv. 8, "O taste and see that the LORD is good;" which Peter respects, 1 Epist. ii. 3, "If so be that ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious," or found it so by experience. It is therefore properly to make an experiment or trial of any thing, whether it be received or refused, and is sometimes opposed to eating and digestion, as Matt. xxvii. 34. That, therefore, which is ascribed unto these persons is, that they had had an experience of the power of the Holy Ghost, that gift of God, in the dispensation of the gospel, the revelation of the truth, and institution of the spiritual worship of it. Of this state, and of the excellency of it, they had made some trial and had some experience; a privilege that all men were not made partakers of. And by this taste they were convinced that it was far more excellent than what they had been before accustomed unto, although now

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they had a mind to leave the finest wheat for their old acorns. Wherefore, although tasting contains a diminution in it, if compared with that spiritual eating and drinking, with that digestion of gospel truths, turning them into nourishment, which are in true believers, yet, absolutely considered, it denotes that apprehension and experience of the excellency of the gospel as administered by the Spirit, which is a great privilege and spiritual advantage, the contempt whereof will prove an unspeakable aggravation of the sin, and the remediless ruin of apostates. The meaning, then, of this character given concerning these apostates is, that they had some experience of the power and efficacy of the Holy Spirit from heaven, in gospel administrations and worship. For what some say of faith, it hath here no place; and what others affirm of Christ, and his being the gift of God, comes in the issue unto what we have proposed. And we may observe, farther to clear the design of the apostle in this commination,—

I. *That all the gifts of God under the gospel are peculiarly heavenly,* John iii. 12; Eph. i. 3;—and that in opposition, 1. To earthly things, Col. iii. 1, 2; 2. To carnal ordinances, Heb. ix. 23. Let them beware by whom they are despised.

II. *The Holy Ghost, for the revelation of the mysteries of the gospel, and the institution of the ordinances of spiritual worship, is the great gift of God under the new testament.*

III. *There is a goodness and excellency in this heavenly gift which may be tasted or experienced in some measure by such as never receive them in their life, power, and efficacy.* They may taste,—1. Of the *word* in its truth, not its power; 2. Of the *worship* of the church in its outward order, not in its inward beauty; 3. Of the *gifts* of the church, not its graces.

IV. *A rejection of the gospel, its truth and worship, after some experience had of their worth and excellency, is a high aggravation of sin, and a certain presage of destruction.*

The THIRD property whereby these persons are described is added in these words, Καὶ μετόχους γενηθέντας Πνεύματος ἁγίου,—"And were made partakers of the Holy Ghost." This is placed in the middle or centre of the privileges enumerated, two preceding it and two following after, as that which is the root and animating principle of them all. They all are effects of the Holy Ghost, in his gifts or his graces, and so do depend on the participation of him. Now, men do so partake of the Holy Ghost as they do receive him; and he may be received either as unto personal inhabitation or as unto spiritual operations. In the first way, "the world cannot receive him," John xiv. 17,—where the world is opposed unto true believers; and therefore those here intended were not in that sense partakers of

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him. His operations respect his gifts. So to partake of him is to have a part, share, or portion in what he distributes by way of spiritual gifts; in answer unto that expression, "All these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will," 1 Cor. xii. 11. So Peter told Simon the magician that he had no part in spiritual gifts; he was not partaker of the Holy Ghost, Acts viii. 21. Wherefore, to be partaker of the Holy Ghost is to have a share in and benefit of his spiritual operations.

But whereas the other things mentioned are also gifts or operations of the Holy Ghost, on what ground or for what reason is this mentioned here in particular, that they were "made partakers of him," which, if his operations only be intended, seems to be expressed in the other instances?

Ans. 1. It is, as we observed before, no unusual thing in the Scripture to express the same thing under various notions, the more effectually to impress a consideration and sense of it on our mind, especially where an expression hath a singular emphasis in it, as this hath here used; for it is an exceeding aggravation of the sins of those apostates, that in these things they were "partakers of the Holy Ghost."

2. As was before intimated also, this participation of the Holy Ghost is placed, it may be, in the midst of the several parts of this description, as that whereon they do all depend, and that they are all but instances of it. They were "partakers of the Holy Ghost" in that they were "once enlightened;" and so of the rest.

3. It expresseth their own personal interest in these things. They had an interest in the things mentioned not only objectively, as they were proposed and presented to them in the church, but subjectively, as they themselves in their own persons were made partakers of them. It is one thing for a man to have a share in and benefit by the gifts of the church, another to be personally himself endowed with them.

4. To mind them in an especial manner of the privilege they enjoyed under the gospel, above what they had in their Judaism: for whereas they had not then so much as heard that there was a Holy Ghost,—that is, a blessed dispensation of him in spiritual gifts, Acts xix. 2,—now they themselves in their own persons were made partakers of him; than which there could be no greater aggravation of their apostasy. And we may observe, in our way, that the Holy Ghost is present with many as unto powerful operations with whom he is not present as to gracious inhabitation; or, many are made partakers of him in his spiritual gifts who are never made partakers of him in his saving graces, Matt. vii. 22, 23.

FOURTHLY, It is added in the description, that they had tasted καλὸν Θεοῦ ῥῆμα, "the good word of God." And we must inquire,—

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1. What is meant by the "word of God;" 2. How it is said to be "good;" and, 3. In what sense they "taste" of it.

1. Ῥῆμα is properly "verbum dictum," a word spoken; and although it be sometimes used in another sense by our apostle, and by him alone,—Heb. i. 3, xi. 3, where it denotes the effectual active power of God,—yet both the signification of the word and its principal use elsewhere denote words spoken, and, when applied unto God, his word as preached and declared. See Rom. x. 17; John vi. 68. The word of God,—that is, the word of the gospel as preached,—is that which they thus tasted of. But it may be said, that they enjoyed the word of God in their state of Judaism. They did so as to the written word, for "unto them were committed the oracles of God," Rom. iii. 2; but it is the word of God as preached in the dispensation of the gospel that is eminently thus called, and concerning which such excellent things are spoken, Rom. i. 16; Acts xx. 32; James i. 21.

2. This word is said to be καλόν, "good," desirable, amiable, as the word here used signifieth. Wherein it is so we shall see immediately. But whereas the word of God preached under the dispensation of the gospel may be considered two ways,—(1.) In general, as to the whole system of truths contained therein; and, (2.) In especial, for the declaration made of the accomplishment of the promise in sending Jesus Christ for the redemption of the church,—it is here especially intended in this latter sense. This is emphatically called ῥῆμα Κυρίου, 1 Pet. i. 25. So the promise of God in particular is called his "good word:" Jer. xxix. 10, "After seventy years be accomplished I will visit you, and perform my good word toward you;" as he calls it the "good thing that he had promised," chap. xxxiii. 14. The gospel is the "good tidings" of peace and salvation by Jesus Christ, Isa. lii. 7.

3. Hereof they are said to "taste," as they were before of the heavenly gift. The apostle, as it were, studiously keeps himself to this expression, on purpose to manifest that he intendeth not those who by faith do really receive, feed, and live on Jesus Christ as tendered in the word of the gospel, John vi. 35, 49–51, 54–56. It is as if he had said, "I speak not of those who have received and digested the spiritual food of their souls, and turned it into spiritual nourishment, but of such as have so far tasted of it as that they ought to have desired it as sincere milk, to have grown thereby; but they had received such an experiment of its divine truth and power as that it had various effects upon them." And for the farther explication of these words, and therein of the description of the state of these supposed apostates, we may consider the ensuing observations, which declare the sense of the words, or what is contained in them.

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I. *There is a goodness and excellency in the word of God able to attract and affect the minds of men who yet never arrive at sincere obedience unto it.*

II. *There is an especial goodness in the word of the promise concerning Jesus Christ and the declaration of its accomplishment.*

For the first of these propositions, we may inquire what is that goodness, and wherein it doth consist; as also, how apostatizing backsliders may taste thereof: which things tend to the explanation of the words, and what is designed by the apostle in them.

1. (1.) This goodness and excellency of the word of God consists in its spiritual, heavenly truth. All truth is beautiful and desirable; the perfection of the minds of men consists in the reception of it and conformity unto it; and although "true" be one consideration of any thing, and "good" another, yet they are inseparable properties of the same subject. Whatever is true is also good. So are these things put together by the apostle, Phil. iv. 8. And as truth is good in itself, so is it in its effects on the minds of men; it gives them peace, satisfaction, and contentment. Darkness, errors, falsehood, are evils in themselves, and fill the minds of men with vanity, uncertainty, superstition, dread, and bondage. It is truth that makes the soul free in any kind, John viii. 32. Now, the word of God is the only pure, unmixed, and solid truth: "Thy word is truth," John xvii. 17. In most other things, as to the best evidence attainable, men wander in the wilderness of endless conjectures. The truth of the word of God alone is stable, firm, infallible; which gives rest to the soul. As God is a "God of truth," Deut. xxxii. 4, the "only true God," John xvii. 3, so he is, and he alone is, essentially truth, and the eternal spring of it unto all other things. Hereof is this word the only revelation. How excellent, how desirable, therefore, must it needs be! and what a goodness, to be preferred above all other things, must it be accompanied withal! As it is infallible truth, giving light to the eyes and rest to the soul, it is the "good word of God."

(2.) It is so in the matter of it, or the doctrines contained in it; as,—[1.] The nature and properties of God are declared therein. God being the only good, the only fountain and cause of all goodness, and in whose enjoyment all rest and blessedness do consist, the revelation made of him, his nature and attributes, reflects a singular goodness on it, John xvii. 3. If it be incomparably better to know God than to enjoy the whole world and all that is in it, that word must be good whereby he is revealed unto us, Jer. ix. 23, 24. [2.] It is exceeding good in the revelation of the glorious mystery of the Trinity, therein alone contained. This is that mystery the knowledge whereof is the only means to have a right apprehension of all other

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sacred truths; and without it no one of them can be understood in a due manner, nor improved unto a due end. This is that alone which will give true rest and peace to the soul. And there is not the meanest true believer in the world, who is exercised in faith and obedience, but he hath the power of this truth in and upon his mind, though he be not able to speak much of the notions of it. All grace and truth are built hereon and do centre herein, and thence derive their first power and efficacy. Not one saving apprehension can we have of any gracious dispensation of God towards us, but it is resolved into the existence of God in a trinity of persons, and the economy of their operations with respect unto us. It is a "good word" whereby that mystery is revealed. [3.] It is so in the revelation of the whole mystery of the incarnation of the Son of God, with all the effects of infinite wisdom and grace thereunto belonging. What a satisfactory goodness this is accompanied withal, it is the most part of my business in this world to inquire and declare. [4.] It is so in the declaration of all the benefits of the mediation of Christ, in mercy, grace, pardon, justification, adoption, etc.

(3.) It is a good word with respect unto its blessed effects, Ps. xix. 7–9; Acts xx. 32; James i. 21. On this account the psalmist assures us that it is "more to be desired than gold, yea, than much fine gold;" that it is "sweeter than honey and the honey-comb," Ps. xix. 10;—that is, there is an incomparable excellency, worth, and goodness in it. And he who discerns not this goodness in the word of God is a stranger unto all real benefits by it.

2. How apostatizing persons do taste of this good word of God may be briefly declared. And their so doing hath respect unto the threefold property of it mentioned, whence it is denominated "good:" (1.) Its truth; (2.) Its subject-matter; (3.) Its effects.

And,—(1.) They taste of it as it is true, in the convictions they have thereof, in their knowledge in it, and acknowledgment of it. This gives (as it is the nature of truth to do) some serenity and satisfaction unto their minds, although they are not renewed thereby. They that heard John preach the truth rejoiced in his light, as finding much present satisfaction therein, John v. 35. So was it with them, Luke iv. 22, John vii. 46, and others innumerable, on the like occasion of hearing our Saviour preach. When men, through the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, do escape the pollutions that are in the world through lust, and them that live in error, they taste a goodness, a sweetness, in the rest and satisfaction of their minds, so as that they suppose they are really possessed of the things themselves.

(2.) With respect unto the matter of the word, they have a taste of its goodness in the hopes which they have of their future enjoy-

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ment. Mercy, pardon, life, immortality, and glory, are all proposed in the "good word of God." These, upon those grounds which will fail them at last, they have such hopes to be made partakers of as that they find a great relish and satisfaction therein, especially when they have relief thereby against their fears and convictions; for, even in those ways wherein they deceive themselves, they have a taste of what sweetness and goodness there is in these things unto them by whom they are enjoyed. And as those who really believe and receive Jesus Christ in the word do thereon "rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory," 1 Pet. i. 8, so those who only taste of the word do feel in themselves a great complacency in their affections, Matt. xiii. 20; for,—

(3.) By this taste they may receive many effects of the word on their minds and consciences, and therein have an experience of the word as unto its power and efficacy. It belongs unto the exposition of the place to speak a little hereunto, and withal to declare what the difference is between them, and wherein this tasting comes short of that receiving and feeding on the word by faith which is peculiar unto true believers.

[1.] This taste is accompanied, or it may be so, with delight, pleasure, and satisfaction in hearing of the word preached, especially when it is dispensed by any skilful "master of assemblies," who finds out "acceptable words," or "words of delight," which yet are "upright, and words of truth," Eccles. xii. 10, 11. So was it with those naughty Jews, Ezek. xxxiii. 31, 32; and with Herod, who heard John the Baptist gladly, finding delight and pleasure in his preaching. So was it with multitudes that pressed after Christ to hear the word; and so it is to be feared that it is with many in the days wherein we live.

[2.] It gives not only delight in hearing, but some joy in the things heard. Such are the hearers of the word whom our Saviour compared to the stony ground; they receive it with joy, Matt. xiii. 20, as it was with the hearers of John the Baptist, John v. 35. The word, as tasted only, hath this effect on their minds, that they shall rejoice in the things they hear, not with abiding solid joy, not with joy unspeakable and full of glory, but with that which is temporary and evanid. And this ariseth from that satisfaction which they find in hearing of the good things declared; such are mercy, pardon, grace, immortality, and glory. They cannot but rejoice sometimes at the hearing of them, though they will not be at the pains of getting an interest in them.

[3.] The word only thus tasted of will work on men a change and reformation of their lives, with a readiness unto the performance of many duties, 2 Pet. ii. 18, 20; Mark vi. 20. And,—

[4.] What inward effects it may have on the minds and affections

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of men, in illumination, conviction, and humiliation, I have declared at large elsewhere. But, all this while, this is but tasting. The word of the gospel, and Christ preached therein, is the food of our souls; and true faith doth not only taste it, but feed upon it, whereby it is turned into grace and spiritual nourishment in the heart. And hereunto is required:—1*st*. The laying it up, or treasuring of it in the heart, Luke i. 66, ii. 19. No nourishment will ever be obtained by food unless it be received into the stomach, where the means and causes of digestion and communication are placed; and if the word be not placed in the heart by fixed meditation and delight, it may please for a season, but it will not nourish the soul. 2*dly*. Food must be mixed and incorporated with the digestive humour, power, and faculty of the stomach, whereinsoever it consists, or it will not nourish. Give a man never so much food, if there be any noxious humour in the stomach hindering it from mixing itself with the means of digestion, it will no way profit him; and until the word in the heart be mixed and incorporated with faith, it will not advantage us, Heb. iv. 2;—and there is nothing hereof where there is a taste of the word only. 3*dly*. When men feed on the word, it is turned into a principle of life, spiritual strength, and growth within; which a taste of it only will not give. As food, when it is digested, turns into flesh and blood and spirits, so doth the word, and Christ therein, unto the souls of men spiritually. Hence Christ becometh "our life," and "liveth in us," as the efficient cause of our spiritual life, Gal. ii. 20; Col. iii. 3; and we grow and increase by the word, 1 Pet. ii. 2. A mere taste, though it may yield present refreshment, yet it communicates no abiding strength. Hence multitudes relish the word when it is preached, but never attain life, or strength, or growth by it. 4*thly*. The word received as it ought will transform the soul into the likeness of God, who sends us this food to change our whole spiritual constitution, and to render our nature like unto his, in "righteousness and true holiness," Eph. iv. 21–24; 2 Cor. iii. 18. This a taste only will effect nothing towards; nor, to conclude, will it give us such a love of the truth as to abide by it in trials or temptations, 2 Thess. ii. 10, nor bring forth the fruits of it in universal obedience. And I might farther discourse from hence of the deplorable condition of them who satisfy their minds in mere notions of the truth, and empty speculations about it, without once attaining so much as a taste of the goodness of the word,—of which sort there are many in the world; as also show the necessity, which all the hearers of the word lie under, of a severe scrutiny into their own souls, whether they do not rest in a taste only of the word, but come short of feeding upon it and of Christ therein, but that I must not divert from the text. What hath been here spoken was needful to

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declare the true state and condition of the persons spoken of. The second proposition mentioned hath been treated of elsewhere.

LASTLY, It is added, Δυνάμεις τε μέλλοντος αἰῶνος,—"And the powers of the world to come." Δυνάμεις are הַגְּבוּרוֹת or נִפְלָאוֹת, the mighty, great, miraculous operations and works of the Holy Ghost. What they were, and how they were wrought among these Hebrews, hath been declared in our Exposition on chap. ii. 4, whither I refer the reader; and they are known from the Acts of the Apostles, where sundry instances of them are recorded. I have also proved on that chapter, that by "The world to come," our apostle in this epistle intends the days of the Messiah, that being the usual name of it in the church at that time, as the new world which God had promised to create. Wherefore these "powers of the world to come" were the gifts whereby those signs, wonders, and mighty works, were then wrought by the Holy Ghost, according as it was foretold by the prophets that they should be so. See Joel ii. 28–32 compared with Acts ii. 16–21. These the persons spoken of are supposed to have tasted, for the particle τε refers to γευσαμένους foregoing. Either they had been wrought in and by themselves, or by others in their sight, whereby they had had an experience of the glorious and powerful working of the Holy Ghost in the confirmation of the gospel. Yea, I do judge that themselves in their own persons were partakers of these powers, in the gift of tongues and other miraculous operations; which was the highest aggravation possible of their apostasy, and that which peculiarly rendered their recovery impossible: for there is not in the Scripture an impossibility put upon the recovery of any but such as peculiarly sin against the Holy Ghost;—and although that guilt may be otherwise contracted, yet in none so signally as by this of rejecting that truth which was confirmed by his mighty operations in them that rejected it; which could not be done without an ascription of his divine power unto the devil. Yet would I not fix on *extraordinary gifts* exclusively unto those that are ordinary. They also are of the "powers of the world to come;" so is every thing that belongs to the erection or preservation of the new world, or the kingdom of Christ. To the first setting up of a kingdom great and mighty power is required; but being set up, the ordinary dispensation of power will preserve it. So it is in this matter. The extraordinary miraculous gifts of the Spirit were used in the erection of Christ's kingdom, but it is continued by ordinary gifts; which therefore also belong unto the "powers of the world to come."

From the consideration of this description in all the parts of it, we may understand what sort of persons it is that is here intended by the apostle. And it appears, yea, is evident,—

1. That the persons here intended are *not true and sincere be-*

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lievers in the strict and proper sense of that name, at least they are not described here as such; so that from hence nothing can be concluded concerning them that are so, as to the possibility of their total and final apostasy: for,—(1.) There is in their full and large description no mention of faith or believing, either expressly or in terms equivalent. And in no other place of the Scripture are such intended, but [except where] they are mentioned by what belongs essentially to their state. And, (2.) There is not any thing ascribed to these persons that is peculiar to them as such, or discriminative of them, as taken either from their especial relation unto God in Christ, or any such property of their own as is not communicable unto others. For instance, they are not said to be called according to God's purpose; to be born again, not of the will of man, nor of the will of the flesh, but of God; not to be justified, or sanctified, or united unto Christ, or to be the sons of God by adoption; nor have they any other *characteristical* note of true believers ascribed to them. (3.) They are in the following verses compared to the ground on which the rain often falls, and beareth nothing but thorns and briers. But this is not so with true believers; for faith itself is an herb peculiar to the enclosed garden of Christ, and meet for him by whom we are dressed. (4.) The apostle, discoursing afterwards of true believers, doth in many particulars distinguish them from such as might be apostates, which is supposed of the persons here intended, as was in part before declared; for,—[1.] He ascribes unto them in general "*better things*," and such as "accompany salvation," as we observed, verse 9. [2.] He ascribes unto them a "work and *labour of love*," as it is true faith alone which worketh by love, verse 10, whereof he speaks not one word concerning these. [3.] He asserts their preservation, on the account,—1*st*. Of the righteousness and faithfulness of God, verse 10; 2*dly*. Of the immutability of his counsel concerning them, verses 17, 18. In all these and sundry other instances doth he put a difference between these apostates and true believers. And whereas the apostle intends to declare the aggravation of their sin in falling away by the principal privileges whereof they were made partakers, here is not one word, in name or thing, of those which he expressly assigns to be the chief privileges of true believers, Rom. viii. 27–30.

2. Our next inquiry is more particularly whom he doth intend; and,—(1.) They were such as not long before were converted from Judaism unto Christianity, upon the evidence of the truth of its doctrine, and the miraculous operations wherewith its dispensation was accompanied. (2.) He intends not the *common sort* of them, but such as had obtained *especial privileges* among them; for they had received extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost, as speaking with

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tongues or working of miracles. And, (3.) They had found in themselves and others convincing evidences that the kingdom of God and the Messiah, which they called "The world to come," was come unto them, and had satisfaction in the glories of it. (4.) Such persons as these, as they have a work of light on their minds, so, according unto the efficacy of their convictions, they may have such a change wrought upon their *affections* and in their conversation, as that they may be of great esteem among professors; and such these here intended might be. Now, it must needs be some horrible frame of spirit, some malicious enmity against the truth and holiness of Christ and the gospel, some violent love of sin and the world, that could turn off such persons as these from the faith, and blot out all that light and conviction of truth which they had received. But the least grace is a better security for heaven than the greatest gifts or privileges whatever.

These are the persons concerning whom our apostle discourseth; and of them it is supposed by him that they may "fall away," *καὶ παραπεσόντας*. The especial nature of the sin here intended is afterward declared in two instances or aggravating circumstances. This word expresseth the respect it had to the state and condition of the sinners themselves; they "fall away,"—do that whereby they do so. I think we have well expressed the word, "If they shall fall away." Our old translations rendered it only, "If they shall fall," which expressed not the sense of the word, and was liable unto a sense not at all intended; for he doth not say, "If they shall fall into sin," this or that, or any sin whatever that can be named, suppose the greatest sin imaginable,—namely, the denial of Christ in the time of danger and persecution. This was that sin (as we intimated before) about which so many contests were raised of old, and so many canons were multiplied about the ordering of them who had contracted the guilt thereof. But one example, well considered, had been a better guide for them than all their own arbitrary rules and imaginations. But Peter fell into this sin, and yet was renewed again to repentance, and that speedily. Wherefore we may lay down this, in the first place, as to the sense of the words: There is no particular sin that any man may fall into occasionally, through the power of temptation, that can cast the sinner under this commination, so that it should be impossible to renew him to repentance. It must, therefore, secondly, be a course of sin or sinning that is intended. But there are various degrees herein also, yea, there are divers kinds of such courses in sin. A man may so fall into a way of sin as still to retain in his mind such a principle of light and conviction as may be suitable to his recovery. To exclude such from all hopes of repentance is expressly contrary to Ezek. xviii. 21, Isa. lv. 7, yea, and to the whole sense of

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the Scripture. Wherefore, men, after some conviction and reformation of life, may fall into corrupt and wicked courses, and make a long abode or continuance in them. Examples hereof we have every day amongst us, although, it may be, none to parallel that of Manasseh. Consider the nature of his education under his father Hezekiah, the greatness of his sins, the length of his continuance in them, with his following recovery, and he is a great instance in this case. Whilst there is in such persons any seed of light, or conviction of truth which is capable of an excitation or revival, so as to put forth its power and efficacy in their souls, they cannot be looked on to be in the condition intended, though their case be dangerous.

3. Our apostle makes a distinction between *πταίω* and *πίπτω*, Rom. xi. 11, between "stumbling" and "falling," and would not allow that the unbelieving Jews of those days were come so far as *πίπτειν*,—that is, to fall absolutely: *Λέγω οὖν, Μὴ ἔπταισαν ἵνα πέσωσι; μὴ γένοιτο*·—"I say then, Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid!" that is, absolutely and irrecoverably. So, therefore, doth that word signify in this place. And *παραπίπτω* increaseth the signification, either as to perverseness in the manner of the fall, or as to violence in the fall itself.

From what hath been discoursed, it will appear what falling away it is that the apostle here intendeth. And,—

(1.) It is not a falling into this or that *actual sin*, be it of what nature it will; which may be, and yet not be a "falling away."

(2.) It is not a falling upon *temptation* or surprisal, for concerning such fallings we have rules of another kind given us in sundry places, and those exemplified in especial instances; but it is that which is premeditated, of deliberation and choice.

(3.) It is not a falling by relinquishment or renunciation of some, though very material, *principles* of Christian religion, by error or seduction, as the Corinthians fell in denying the resurrection of the dead, and the Galatians by denying justification by faith in Christ alone. Wherefore,—

(4.) It must consist in a *total renunciation* of all the constituent principles and doctrines of Christianity, whence it is denominated. Such was the sin of them who relinquished the gospel to return unto Judaism, as it was then stated, in opposition unto it and hatred of it. This it was, and not any kind of actual sins, that the apostle manifestly discourseth concerning.

(5.) For the completing of this falling away, according to the intention of the apostle, it is required that this renunciation be *avowed* and professed, as when a man forsaketh the profession of the gospel and falls into Judaism, or Mohammedanism, or Gentilism, in persuasion and practice; for the apostle discourseth concerning faith and obe-

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dience as professed, and so, therefore, also of their contraries. And this avowment of a relinquishment of the gospel hath many provoking aggravations attending it. And yet whereas some men may in their hearts and minds utterly renounce the gospel, but, upon some outward, secular considerations, either dare not or will not profess that inward renunciation, their falling away is complete and total in the sight of God; and all they do to cover their apostasy, in an external compliance with Christian religion, is in the sight of God but a mocking of him, and the highest aggravation of their sin.

This is the "falling away" intended by the apostle,—a voluntary, resolved relinquishment of, and apostasy from, the gospel, the faith, rule, and obedience thereof; which cannot be without casting the highest reproach and contumely imaginable upon the person of Christ himself, as it is afterward expressed.

Concerning these persons, and their thus "falling away," two things are to be considered in the text:—1. What is affirmed of them; 2. The reason of that affirmation.

1. The first is, *That it is impossible to renew them again unto repentance.* The thing intended is negative; to "renew them again unto repentance," this is denied of them. But the modification of that negation turns the proposition into an affirmation, "It is impossible so to do."

Ἀδύνατον γὰρ. The importance [import] of this word is dubious; some think an *absolute*, and others only a *moral* impossibility is intended thereby. This latter most fix upon, so that it is a matter rare, difficult, and seldom to be expected, that is intended, and not that which is absolutely impossible. Considerable reasons and instances are produced for either interpretation. But we must look farther into the meaning of it.

(1.) All future events depend on God, who alone doth necessarily exist. Other things may be or may not be, as they respect him or his will; and so things that are future may be said to be *impossible*, to be so either with respect unto the nature of God, or his decrees, or his moral rule, order, and law. Things are impossible with respect unto the nature of God, either absolutely, as being inconsistent with his being and essential properties; so it is *impossible that God should lie;*—or on some supposition; so it is impossible that *God should forgive sin without satisfaction*, on the supposition of his law and the sanction of it. In this sense, the repentance of these apostates, *it may be*, is not impossible. I say *it may be.* It may be there is nothing in it contrary to any essential properties of the nature of God, either directly or reductively, but I will not be positive herein; for the things ascribed unto these apostates are such,—namely, their "crucifying the Son of God afresh, and putting him to

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an open shame,"—as that I know not but that it may be contrary to the holiness, and righteousness, and glory of God, as the supreme ruler of the world, to have any more mercy on them than on the devils themselves or those that are in hell. But I will not assert this to be the meaning of the place.

(2.) Again; things *possible* in themselves and with respect unto the nature of God are rendered impossible by God's *decree* and purpose; he hath absolutely determined that they shall never be. So it was impossible that Saul and his posterity should be preserved in the kingdom of Israel. It was not contrary to the nature of God, but God had decreed that it should not be, 1 Sam. xv. 28, 29. But the decrees of God respecting persons in particular, and not *qualifications* in the first place, they cannot be here intended; because they are free acts of his will, not revealed, neither in particular nor by virtue of any general rule, as they are sovereign acts, making differences between persons in the same condition, Rom. ix. 11, 12. What is possible or impossible with respect unto the nature of God we may know in some good measure, from the certain knowledge we may have of his being and essential properties; but what is so, one way or other, with respect unto his decrees or purposes, which are sovereign, free acts of his will, knoweth no man, no, not the angels in heaven, Isa. xl. 13, 14; Rom. xi. 34.

(3.) Things are *possible* or *impossible* with respect unto the *rule* and *order* of all things that God hath appointed. When in things of duty God hath neither expressly commanded them, nor appointed means for the performance of them, then are we to look upon them as *impossible;* and then, with respect unto us, they are so absolutely, and so to be esteemed. And this is the impossibility here principally intended. It is a thing that God hath neither commanded us to endeavour, nor appointed means to attain it, nor promised to assist us in it. It is therefore that which we have no reason to look after, attempt, or expect, as being not possible by any law, rule, or constitution of God.

The apostle instructs us no farther in the nature of future events but as our own duty is concerned in them. It is not for us either to look, or hope, or pray for, or endeavour the renewal of such persons unto repentance. God gives law unto us in these things, not unto himself. It may be possible with God, for aught we know, if there be not a contradiction in it unto any holy properties of his nature; only he will not have us to expect any such things from him, nor hath he appointed any means for us to endeavour it. What he shall do we ought thankfully to accept; but our own duty towards such persons is absolutely at an end,—and indeed they put themselves wholly out of our reach.

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That which is said to be thus impossible with respect unto these persons is, *πάλιν ἀναχαινίζειν εἰς μετάνοιαν*, "to renew them again unto repentance." Μετάνοια in the New Testament, with respect unto God, signifies a "gracious change of mind" on gospel principles and promises, leading the whole soul into conversion unto God. תְּשׁוּבָה, this is the beginning and entrance of our turning to God, without which neither the will nor the affections will be engaged unto him, nor is it possible for sinners to find acceptance with him.

It is impossible *ἀναχαινίζειν*, "to renew." The construction of the words is defective, and must be supplied. Σέ may be added, to renew "themselves,"—it is not possible they should do so: or *τινάς*, that "some" should, that any should renew them; and this I judge to be intended, for the impossibility mentioned respects the duty and endeavours of others. In vain shall any attempt their recovery, by the use of any means whatever. And we must inquire what it is to be "renewed," and what it is to be "renewed again."

Now, our *ἀναχαινισμός* is the renovation of the image of God in our nature, whereby we are dedicated again unto him; for as we had lost the image of God by sin, and were separated from him as things profane, this *ἀναχαινισμός* respects both the restoration of our nature and the dedication of our persons to God. And it is twofold:—

(1.) *Real* and *internal*, in regeneration and effectual sanctification: "The washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost," Tit. iii. 5; 1 Thess. v. 23. But this is not that which is here intended; for this these apostates never had, and so cannot be said to be renewed again unto it, for no man can be renewed again unto that which he never had.

(2.) It is *outward in the profession* and pledge of it. Wherefore renovation in this sense consists in the solemn confession of faith and repentance by Jesus Christ, with the seal of baptism received thereon; for thus it was with all those who were converted unto the gospel. Upon their profession of repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, they received the baptismal pledge of an inward renovation, though really they were not partakers thereof. But this estate was their *ἀναχαινισμός*, their renovation. From this state they fell totally, renouncing Him who is the author of it, his grace which is the cause of it, and the ordinance which is the pledge thereof.

Hence it appears what it is *πάλιν ἀναχαινίζειν*, "to renew them again." It is to bring them again into this state of profession by a second renovation, and a second baptism as a pledge thereof. This is determined impossible, and so unwarrantable for any to attempt; and, for the most part, such persons do openly fall into such blasphemies against, and engage (if they have power) into such persecu-

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tion of the truth, as that they give themselves sufficient direction how others should behave themselves towards them. So the ancient church was satisfied in the case of Julian. This is the sum of what is affirmed concerning these apostates,—namely, that "it is impossible to renew them again unto repentance;" that is, so to act towards them as to bring them to that repentance whereby they may be instated in their former condition.

Hence sundry things may be observed for the clearing of the apostle's design in this discourse; as,—

(1.) Here is nothing said concerning the acceptance or refusal of *any upon repentance*, or the profession thereof after any sin, to be made by the church; whose judgment is to be determined by other rules and circumstances. And this perfectly excludes the pretence of the Novatians from any countenance in these words; for whereas they would have drawn their warranty from hence for the utter exclusion from church communion of all those who had denied the faith in times of persecution, although they expressed a repentance whose sincerity they could not evince, those only are intended who neither do nor can come to repentance itself, nor make a profession of it; with whom the church had no more to do. It is not said that men who ever thus fell away shall not, upon their repentance, be admitted again into their former state in the church, but that such is the severity of God against them that he will not again give them repentance unto life.

(2.) Here is nothing that may be brought in bar against such as, having fallen by any *great sin*, or any course in sinning, and that after light, convictions, and gifts received and exercised, desire to repent of their sins and endeavour after sincerity therein; yea, such a desire and endeavour exempt any one from the judgment here threatened.

There is therefore in it that which tends greatly to the encouragement of such sinners; for whereas it is here declared, concerning those who are thus rejected of God, that "it is impossible to renew them," or to do any thing towards them that shall have a tendency unto repentance, those who are not satisfied that they do yet savingly repent, but only are sincerely exercised how they may attain thereunto, have no concernment in this commination, but evidently have the door of mercy still open unto them, for it is shut only against those who shall never endeavour to turn by repentance. And although persons so rejected of God may fall under convictions of their sin, attended with despair (which is unto them a foresight of their future condition), yet as unto the least attempt after repentance, on the terms of the gospel, they do never rise up unto it. Wherefore, the *impossibility* intended, of what sort soever it be, respects the

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severity of God, not in refusing or rejecting the greatest sinners which seek after and would be renewed unto repentance (which is contrary unto innumerable of his promises); but in the giving up such sinners as these are, here mentioned, unto such obdurateness and obstinacy in sinning, that blindness of mind and hardness of heart, as that they neither will nor shall ever sincerely seek after repentance, nor may any means, according to the mind of God, be used to bring them thereunto. And the righteousness of the exercise of this severity is taken from the nature of this sin, or what is contained in it, which the apostle declares in the ensuing instances. And we may in our passage observe, that,—

In the preaching of the gospel, it is necessary to propose unto men, and to insist on, the severity of God in dealing with provoking sinners against it. And indeed the severity of God is principally, though not solely, exercised with respect unto sins against the gospel. This our apostle calls us to the consideration of in the case of the unbelieving Jews: Rom. xi. 22, *Ἴδε οὖν χρηστότητα καὶ ἀποτομίαν θεοῦ· ἐπὶ μὲν τοὺς πεσόντας ἀποτομίαν*—"Behold the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell" (those in the text), "severity." *Ἀποτομία* is a sharp dissection or cutting off. I do not, therefore, understand by it an essential property of the nature of God. It is not the same with his holiness, righteousness, or vindictive justice. These are essential properties of the divine nature, whence it is that he neither will nor can absolutely suffer men to sin and let them go for ever unpunished, without any satisfaction or atonement made for their sins; whereof we have treated elsewhere. But by God's "severity" is intended the free act of his will, acting according unto these properties of his nature in an eminent manner, when and how he pleaseth; and therefore into them it is resolved. So our apostle, when he would intimate this severity unto us, to ingenerate in us a holy fear and reverence of God in his worship, adds as his motive, "For our God is a consuming fire," Heb. xii. 29; that is, of an infinitely pure, holy, righteous nature, according to which he will deal with us, and so may unexpectedly break forth upon us in severity if we labour not for "grace to serve him acceptably with reverence and godly fear." Wherefore, this severity of God is his exemplary dealing with provoking sinners, according to the exigence of his holiness and wisdom, without an interposition of longer patience or forbearance. There are some sins, or degrees in sinning, that neither the holiness, nor majesty, nor wisdom of God can so bear withal as to suffer them to pass unpunished or unremarked on in this world. In such cases is God said to exercise his severity; and he doth so,—

(1.) In extraordinary *outward judgments* upon open, profligate sin-

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ners, especially the enemies of his church and glory. Hence on such an occasion doth God give that description of himself, Nahum i. 2, "God is jealous, and the LORD revengeth; the LORD revengeth, and is furious; the LORD will take vengeance on his adversaries, and he reserveth wrath for his enemies." When God acteth towards his adversaries according to the description here given of himself, he deals with them in severity. And two things are required to make these judgments of God against his adversaries in this world to be instances thereof:—[1.] That they be *unusual*, such as do not commonly and frequently fall out in the ordinary dispensation of divine providence, Num. xvi. 29, 30. God doth not, in the government of the world, suffer any thing to fall out or come to pass that in the issue shall be contrary to his justice or inconsistent with his righteousness; but yet he beareth with things so, for the most part, as that he will manifest himself to be exceedingly full of patience and long-suffering, as also to exercise the faith of them that believe in the expectation of a future judgment. Wherefore there must be somewhat extraordinary in those judgments wherein God will exercise and manifest severity. So it is expressed, Isa. xxviii. 21, "The LORD shall rise up as in mount Perazim, he shall be wroth as in the valley of Gibeon, that he may do his work, his strange work; and bring to pass his act, his strange act." The work he will do is his work, but it is his "strange work;"—that is, not strange from or opposite unto his nature, for so he will do nothing; but that which is unusual, which he doth but seldom, and is therefore marvellous. Thus, in sudden destructions of persecutors or persons of a flagitious wickedness, in great desolations of provoking families, cities, and nations, in fire from heaven, in inundations, plagues, earthquakes, and such sudden, extraordinary, consuming judgments, God giveth instances of his severity in the world, Rom. i. 18. [2.] In this case it is required that such judgments be *open*, *visible*, and *manifest*, both unto those who are punished and to others who wisely consider them. So God speaketh of himself, Deut. vii. 10, "God that repayeth them that hate him to their face, to destroy them: he will not be slack to him that hateth him, he will repay him to his face;" —that is, he will do it openly and manifestly, so that themselves and all others shall take notice of his severity therein. This, I say, is one way whereby God acts his severity in this world. And hereby he poureth everlasting contempt upon the security of his proudest and haughtiest adversaries; for when they think they have sufficiently provided for their own safety, and stopped all avenues of evil, according to the rules of their policy and wisdom, with the best observations they are able to make of the ordinary effects of his providence, and so give up themselves to take satisfaction in their lusts and pleasures,

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he breaks in upon them with an instance and example of his severity to their utter destruction. So, "when they say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape," 1 Thess. v. 3. This will be the state one day of the whole Babylonish interest in the world, Rev. xviii. 7–10. But this is not directly intended in this place, although even this effect of God's severity overtook these apostates afterward.

(2.) In *spiritual judgments*. By these God in his severity leaveth unprofitable, provoking, and apostate professors under the impossibility here intended of being renewed unto repentance. And this is the sorest of all God's judgments. There is in it a sentence of eternal damnation denounced on men aforehand in this world. So our apostle tells us, "Some men's sins are open beforehand, going before to judgment," 1 Tim. v. 24. God so passeth judgment concerning them in this world as that there shall be no alteration in their state and condition to eternity. And this severity of God towards sinners under the gospel, shutting them up under final impenitency, consists in these four things:—

[1.] God puts an end unto all his *expectation* concerning them; he looks for no more from them, and so exerciseth no more care about them. Whilst God is pleased to afford the use of means for conversion and repentance unto any, he is said to look for and expect answerable fruits: "I did," saith he, "so and so to my vineyard; and I looked that it should bring forth grapes," Isa. v. 2, 4. Wherefore, when God takes away all means of grace and repentance from any, then he puts an end unto his own expectation of any fruits; for if a man can have no fruit from his vineyard whilst he dresseth it, or from his field whilst he tilleth it, he will never look for any after he hath given them up and laid them waste. And, on the other side, when he utterly ceaseth to look for any fruit from them, he will till them no more; for why should he put himself to charge or trouble to no purpose? Woe unto the souls of men when God in this sense looks for no more at their hands!—that is, when he puts an end unto that patience or long-suffering towards them from whence all supplies of the means of conversion and repentance do arise and spring. This God doth by some, and that in such ways as we shall afterward declare.

[2.] God will actually punish them with, or inflict on them, *hardness of heart* and blindness of mind, that they never shall repent or believe: John xii. 39, 40, "Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said again, He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them." God

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will now judicially blind them and harden them, and, by one means or other, every thing that befalls them shall promote their induration. So it was with these Jews; the doctrine of Christ filled them with envy, his holiness with malice, and his miracles with rage and madness. Their table was a snare to them, and that which should have been for their good turned to their hurt. So is it with all them whom God in his severity hardeneth. Whether the outward means be continued unto them or no, all is one; every thing shall drive them farther from God, and increase their obstinacy against him. From hence they become scoffers and persecutors, avowedly scorning and hating the truth; and herein, it may be, they shall please themselves until they are swallowed up in despair or the grave.

[3.] God usually in his severity gives them up unto *sensual lusts*. So he dealt with the idolaters of old: he "gave them up unto vile affections," Rom. i. 26, such as those there described by the apostle; and in the pursuit of them "gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient," verse 28; whence they were "filled with all unrighteousness," verse 29. So doth God frequently deal with apostates from the gospel, or from the principal truths of it, unto idolatry and superstition. And when they are engaged in the pursuit of these lusts, especially when they are judicially given up unto them, they are held assuredly, as under cords and chains, unto final impenitency.

[4.] God gave such persons up unto *Satan*, to be blinded, and led by him into pernicious delusions: "Because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved, God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness," 2 Thess. ii. 10–12. This was the state and condition of the persons here prophesied of. The truth of the gospel was preached unto them, and for some time professed by them. They received the truth; but they received not the love of it, so as to comply with it and improve it unto its proper end. This kept them barren and unfruitful under their profession; for where the truth is not loved, as well as believed or assented unto, it will bring forth no fruit. But this was not all; they had pleasure in their sins, lusts, and unrighteousnesses, resolving not to part with them on any terms. Whereas, therefore, these are all of them absolutely and without limitation judged and condemned by the truth of the gospel, they began to dislike and secretly to hate the truth itself. But whereas, together with their lusts and unrighteousnesses, wherein they had pleasure, they found a necessity of a religion, one or other, or the pretence of some religion or other, to give them countenance against the truth which they rejected, they were in a readiness to any thing that

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should offer itself unto them. In this condition, in the way of punishment, and as a revenge of their horrible ingratitude and contempt of his gospel, God gives them up to the power of Satan, who blinds, deludes, and deceives them with such efficacy as that they shall not only readily embrace, but obstinately believe and adhere to, the lies, errors, and falsehoods that he shall suggest unto them. And this is the way and course whereby so many carnal gospellers are turned off unto Romish idolatry every day.

Other instances of the severity of God on this occasion might be given, but these are fully sufficient to declare the manner of his dealing with such as those described in the text: whence it follows that their renovation unto repentance is impossible; for what hopes or expectations should we have concerning such as God hath utterly forsaken, whom he hath judicially smitten with blindness and hardness of heart, whom he hath given up not only to the power and efficacy of their own lusts and vile affections, but also immediately unto Satan, to be deluded and led captive at his pleasure? In vain shall the repentance of such persons be either expected or endeavoured.

And this severity of God ought to be preached and insisted on in the declaration of the gospel. Let the reader consult what hath been already offered concerning the use of gospel threatenings and comminations on the third and fourth chapters. There is a proneness in corrupted nature to "despise the riches of the goodness, forbearance, and long-suffering of God, not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth them to repentance;" and thereon, "after their hardness and impenitent heart, they treasure up to themselves wrath against the day of wrath," as our apostle speaks, Rom. ii. 4, 5. Considering nothing in God but mercy and long-suffering, and nothing in the gospel but grace and pardon, they are ready to despise and turn them into lasciviousness, or from them both to countenance themselves in their sins. By this means, on such mistaken apprehensions, suited to their lusts and corrupt inclinations, heightened by the craft of Satan, do multitudes under the preaching of the gospel harden themselves daily to destruction. And others there are who, although they will not on such wicked pretences give up themselves to their lusts and carnal affections, yet, for want of constant vigilancy and watchfulness, are apt to have sloth and negligence, with many ill frames of spirit, to increase and grow upon them. Both sorts are to be stirred up by being put in mind of this severity of God. They are to be taught that there are secret powers, accompanying the dispensation of the gospel, continually "in a readiness to revenge all disobedience," 2 Cor. x. 6;—that "God is not mocked, for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap: for he that

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soweth to his flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting," Gal. vi. 7, 8. But I have elsewhere already showed the necessity there was of arming the gospel with threatenings, as well as confirming of it with promises, so as that it may not be here again at large insisted on.

From what hath been discoursed, it is evident how necessary and wholesome a warning or threatening is here expressed by the apostle. It is the open mistakes of men that have drawn undue entanglements out of it; in itself it is both plain and necessary. Shall we be afraid to say that God will not renew such sinners as those before described unto repentance? or to declare unto sinners that without repentance they cannot be saved? or shall we preach to men, that whatever light they have had, whatever gifts they have received, whatever privileges they have been made partakers of, whatever profession they have made, or for how long a season soever, if they fall totally and despitefully from the gospel into that which is most opposite both to its truth and holiness, yet there is no doubt but they may again repent and be saved? God forbid so great a wickedness should fall from our mouths! Nay, we are to warn all persons in danger of such apostasies that "if any one so draw back, God's soul shall have no pleasure in him;" that "it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God;" that he will harden such sinners, and "give them up to strong delusions, that they may be damned;" that he is not under the engagement of any promise to give them repentance, but hath rather given many severe threatenings to the contrary. He hath told us that such persons are as "trees twice dead, plucked up by the roots," of which there is no hope; that "denying the Lord that bought them, they bring on themselves swift destruction,—whose damnation slumbereth not;" with the like declarations of severity against them innumerable.

But what shall be said unto them who, having through great temptations, and it may be fears and surprisals, for a season renounced the gospel, or such as, by reason of great sins against light and backsliding in profession, do apprehend themselves to be fallen into this condition, and yet are greatly desirous of a recovery, and do cry to God for repentance and acceptance? I answer as before, they are not at all concerned in this text. Here is nothing excluding them from acceptance with God and eternal salvation, be they who or what they will that seek it by repentance; only there are some who are excluded by God, and do obstinately shut up themselves from all endeavours after repentance itself, with whom we have not any thing to do.

It is true, those alone are here firstly and directly intended who in

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those days had received extraordinary or miraculous gifts of the Holy Ghost. But this, by just analogy, may be extended unto others, now those gifts are ceased in the church; for those gifts and privileges which are yet continued unto men do lay (in present circumstances) the same obligation upon them unto perseverance in profession, and give the same aggravation unto their apostasy, as did those extraordinary gifts formerly conferred upon profession. "Let us not, then, be high-minded, but fear." It is not good approaching too near a precipice. Let unprofitable hearers and backsliders in heart and ways be awaked, lest they may be nearer falling under God's severity than they are aware of. But we must return unto our apostle, giving an account of the nature of this sin, which is attended with so sore a judgment. And this he doth in a double instance.

2. Ἀνασταυροῦντας ἑαυτοῖς τὸν Υἱὸν τοῦ Θεοῦ. Beza affirms that ἑαυτοῖς, "to themselves," is absent from some copies, and then the words may admit of a sense diverse from that which is commonly received; for ἀνασταυροῦντας, "crucifying again," may refer unto τινάς included and supposed in ἀναχαινίζειν, that some or any should renew them. It is impossible that any should renew them to repentance; for this cannot be done without crucifying the Son of God again, since these apostates have utterly rejected all interest in and benefit by his death, as once undergone for sinners. This none can do. We ought not, we cannot, crucify Christ again, that they may be renewed and saved. Who can entertain a thought tending towards a desire that so it might be? And this sense, in the same or an alike case, the apostle plainly expresseth, chap. x. 26, 27, "If we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins." Christ cannot be offered again, and so crucified again, without which the sins of such persons cannot be expiated; for the unbloody sacrificing of Christ every day in the mass was not as yet invented, and it is a relief fit only for them to trust unto who have no interest in that sacrifice which he offered once for all. But there is in that other place an allusion to the sacrifices under the law. Because they could legally expiate no sins but what were past before their offering, they were to be frequently repeated, upon reiterated sinning. So from time to time they sinned (as no man liveth and sinneth not), and had sacrifices renewed for their sins, applied unto the particular sins they had committed. This could now be so no more. Christ being once offered for sin, whoever loseth his interest in that one offering, and forfeiteth the benefit of it, there is no more sacrifice for him: "Christ henceforth dieth no more." It cannot be hence imagined that the grace of the gospel is restrained, as being all confined unto that one sacrifice, from what was represented in the multiplied sacrifices of the law; for,—

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(1.) The *one* sacrifice of Christ extended farther, as to sins and persons, than all those of the law with all their repetitions put together: "By him all that believe are justified from all things, from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses," Acts xiii. 39. There were some sins under the law for which no sacrifice was provided, seeing he who was guilty of them was to die without mercy, as in the cases of murder and adultery, with respect whereunto David saith, "Thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give it: thou delightest not in burnt-offering," Ps. li. 16,—namely, in such cases as his then was. But,—

(2.) In case of apostasy from the one and the other, the event was the same. There was under the law no sacrifice appointed for him who had totally apostatized from its fundamental principles, or sinned בְּיָד רָמָה, "presumptuously," with a hand high and stubborn. This was that "despising of Moses' law," for which those that were guilty thereof were to "die without mercy," Heb. x. 28. And so it is under the gospel. Wilful apostates forfeiting all their interest in the sacrifice of Christ, there is no relief appointed for them, but God will cut them off and destroy them; as shall, God willing, be declared on that place. And this may be the sense of the words, supposing ἑαυτοῖς not to belong originally unto this place. God hath confined all hopes of mercy, grace, and salvation, unto the one single offering and sacrifice of Jesus Christ. This our apostle insisteth on and presseth, chap. ix. 25–28, x. 12, 14. Infinite wisdom and sovereign pleasure have centred all grace, mercy, and blessedness in him alone, John i. 14, 16, 17; Acts iv. 12; Col. i. 19. And this "one offering" of his is so sufficient and effectually powerful unto all that by faith seek an interest therein, that this restraint is no restraint, nor hath any sinner the least cause to complain of it. If they reject and despise it, it is their own fault, and at their own peril; nor is it the reiterated sacrifice of the mass, or whatever else they may betake themselves unto, that will afford them any relief.

But the word is constant enough in ancient copies to maintain its own station, and the context requires its continuance; and this makes the work of "crucifying again" to be the act of the apostates themselves, and to be asserted as that which belongs unto their sin, and not denied as belonging to a relief from their sin: "They crucify him again to themselves." They do it not really, they cannot do so; but they do it to themselves morally. This is in their sin of falling away, part of it comprised in it, which renders it unpardonable; they again crucify the Son of God, not absolutely, but in and to themselves.

And we must inquire how they did it, or in what sense it is by

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the apostle charged on them. Now, this (to omit all other things that may be thought to concur herein) was,—

(1.) Principally by an *accession in suffrage* unto them who had crucified him once before. Hereby they went over the same work with them, and did that for their own parts which the others had done before for theirs. They approved of and justified the fact of the Jews in crucifying him as a malefactor; for there is no medium between these things. The Lord Christ must be esteemed to be the Son of God, and consequently his gospel to be indispensably obeyed, or be supposed to be justly crucified as a seducer, a blasphemer, and a malefactor; for professing himself to be the Son of God, and witnessing that confession unto his death, he must be so received or rejected as an evil-doer. And this was done by these apostates; for, going over to the Jews, they approved of what they had done in crucifying of him as such an one.

(2.) They did it by declaring, that having made trial of him, his gospel and ways, they found nothing of substance, truth, or goodness in them, for which they should continue their profession. Thus that famous or infamous apostate, Julian the emperor, gave this as the motto of his apostasy, Ἀνέγνων, ἔγνων, κατέγνων,—"I have read, known, and condemned" your Gospel. And this hath been the way of apostates in all ages. In the primitive times they were the Gentiles' intelligencers, and, like the spies of old, brought up a false report upon the land; for they were not satisfied, for the most part, to declare their disapprobation of what was really taught, believed, and practised among the Christians, but, the more to countenance their apostasy, not only invidiously represented and odiously traduced what was really professed, but withal invented lies and calumnies about conspiracies, seditions, and inconsistencies with public peace among them, so [as], if it were possible, to ruin the whole interest and all that belonged unto it. This is to "crucify Christ afresh, and to put him to an open shame." And such is the manner of them unto this day. If any have made an accession to the more intimate duties of religion, as prayer and preaching, by virtue of spiritual gifts, with other acts of mutual spiritual communion, which the generality of men concern not themselves in, when, in compliance with their occasions and temptations, they fall from them and renounce them, they aim at nothing more than, by malicious, scurrilous representations of them, and false additions unto them of things perverse or ridiculous, to expose them to open shame and ignominy. Their language is, Ἀνέγνωμεν, ἔγνωμεν, κατέγνωμεν,—"We have known and tried these things, and declare their folly;" so hoping to be believed, because of their pretended experience, which alone is sufficient to render them suspected with all persons of wisdom and sobriety. Now,

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no man living can attempt a higher dishonour against Jesus Christ, in his person or in any of his ways, than openly to profess that upon trial of them they find nothing in them for which they should be desired. But "it had been better for such persons not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them."

And this is the first aggravation of the sin mentioned, taken from the act ascribed unto the sinners, "they crucify him again;" they do it as much as in them lieth, and declare that they would actually do it if it were in their power. He adds another from the consideration of the person who was thus treated by them. It was the "Son of God" whom they dealt thus withal. This they did, not when he had "emptied himself, and made himself of no reputation," so that it was not an easy matter to look through all the veils of his outward weakness and condition in this world, to "behold his glory, as the glory of the only-begotten of the Father" (in which state he was crucified by the Jews); but now when he had been "declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead," and when his divinity was variously attested unto in the world and among themselves. And this is the great aggravation of sin against the gospel, namely, of unbelief, that it is immediately against the "Son of God." His person is despised in it, both absolutely and in the discharge of all his offices; and therefore is God himself so, because he hath nothing to do with us but by his Son. Thirdly, The apostle adds, as another aggravation of their sin, *καὶ παραδειγματίζοντας*, "exposing him again to public ignominy," or "shame." *Παραδειγματίζω* is to bring any supposed offenders unto such open punishment as is shameful in the eyes of men, and renders them vile who are so traduced and punished. The word is but once more used in the New Testament, namely, Matt. i. 19, where it is spoken of Joseph in reference unto his espoused wife, the holy Virgin: *Μὴ θέλων αὐτὴν παραδειγματίσαι*,— "Not willing to make her a public example;" that is, by bringing of her forth unto a shameful punishment, for the terror of others.

According unto this sense, our apostle, expressing the death of Christ as inflicted by men, reduces the evils that accompanied it unto two heads,—(1.) The *pain* of it; and, (2.) The *shame:* Heb. xii. 2, "He endured the cross and despised the shame;" for as the death of the cross was penal, or painful and dolorous, so in the manner of it, in all its circumstances of time, place, person, it was most highly shameful. He was in it *παραδειγματισθείς*, "ignominiously traduced," or "put to an open shame;" yea, the death of the cross amongst all people was peculiarly shameful. Thus in calling over his death in this place, he refers it unto the same heads of suffering and shame,

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—"crucifying him," and "putting him to an open shame." And in this latter he was not spared by these apostates more than in the former, so far as it lay in their power.

And hence we may raise a sufficient answer unto an objection of no small importance that ariseth against our exposition of this place: for it may be said, "That if those, or many of them, or any of them, who actually and really crucified the Son of God in his own person, and put him to open shame, did yet obtain mercy and pardon of that and all other sins, as it is confessed they did, whence is it that those who renounce him, and do so crucify him and put him to shame only metaphorically and to themselves, should be excluded from all hopes of repentance and pardon?"

I answer, That the sin of those who forsake Christ and the gospel, after their conviction of its truth and profession of it, is on many accounts far greater than that of those who crucified him in the days of his flesh. And there are sundry reasons whereon God will exercise more severity towards this latter sort of sinners than towards the former:—

1. The sin is greater, because *no way to be extenuated by ignorance*. This is everywhere allowed as that which made the sin of crucifying of Christ pardonable upon their repentance, and their repentance possible. So Peter, in his sermon to them, lays down this as the foundation of his exhortation unto repentance: "And now, brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers," Acts iii. 17. "Had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory," 1 Cor. ii. 8; which our apostle pleads also in his own case, 1 Tim. i. 13. This put their sin among the number of those which sacrifices were allowed for of old, and which fell under the care of Him who knows how to have "compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way."

But it may be inquired, "How they could be excused by ignorance who had so many means and evidences of conviction as to the truth of his person, that he was the Messiah, and of his doctrine, that it was from heaven? for besides the concurrent testimony of Moses and the prophets given unto him, the holiness of his person and life, the efficacy of his doctrine, and the evidence of his miracles, did abundantly prove and confirm the truth of those things, so that they could be no otherwise ignorant but by wilful obstinacy."

Ans. First, These were indeed such means of conviction as that their sin and unbelief against them had no *real excuse*, as himself everywhere expresseth, John xv. 22, xii. 47, 48, x. 36–38. Secondly, Nothing is allowed unto this ignorance, but that it left their repentance possible and their sin pardonable. Thirdly, This it will do until God hath used all the means of conviction which he intendeth,

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and no longer. This as yet he had not done. He had yet two farther testimonies unto the truth which he would graciously afford:—*First*, His resurrection from the dead, Rom. i. 4, which was always afterward pleaded as the principal evidence of God's approbation of him; *Second*, The effusion of the Holy Spirit in his miraculous operations, Acts ii. 32, 33, v. 32; 1 Tim. iii. 16. But where at any time God hath granted all the means of conviction that he pleaseth, be they ordinary or extraordinary, if they are rejected, there is no hope, Luke xvi. 29–31. On the other side, this sin of rejecting Christ and the gospel after profession is absolutely wilful and with a high hand, against all the light and conviction that God will give of the truth unto any of the children of men in this world.

2. These persons had an *experience* of the truth, goodness, and excellency of the gospel, which those others had not, nor could have; for they had "tasted of the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come," and had received great satisfaction in the things they were convinced of, as was before at large declared. Wherefore, in their rejection of him and them, an unconquerable hatred and malice must be granted to be predominant. And let men take heed what they do when they begin to sin against their own experience, for evil lies at the door.

3. In and under the crucifying of the Lord Christ God had yet a *design* of mercy and grace, to be communicated unto men by the dispensation of his Spirit. Therefore there was a way set open unto those who were guilty of that sin to repentance and pardon. But now, having made use of this also, that being sinned against, there is no place left for any thing but severity. Wherefore,—

4. There was in the sin of these persons *blasphemy against the Holy Ghost;* for they had received in themselves, or seen in others, those mighty operations of his whereby he gave attestation unto Christ and the gospel. Therefore they could not renounce the Lord Christ without an ascription of these works of the Holy Ghost unto the devil, which the devil acted them unto. So saith our apostle, "No man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus anathema," or "accursed," 1 Cor. xii. 3. To call him anathema is to declare and avow that he was justly crucified as an accursed person, as a public pest. This was done by these persons who went over to the Jews, in approbation of what they had done against him. This no man can do speaking by the Holy Ghost,—that is, whosoever doth so is acted by the spirit of the devil; and if he have known the testimony of the Holy Spirit to the contrary, he doth it in despite of him, which renders the sin irremissible.

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CHAPTER II.

Partial apostasy from the gospel—Pretences of the church of Rome against the charge of this evil examined and rejected.

APOSTASY from the gospel is either *total* or *partial*. Of the former we have treated in a high and signal instance. When men wilfully and maliciously (for they cannot do it wilfully but they must do it maliciously) renounce Jesus Christ as a seducer and malefactor, going over in their suffrage unto the Jews, by whom he was crucified, they enter into that part of hell and darkness which properly constitutes this sin. It were well for such persons if their guilt had no other aggravation than theirs who actually "with wicked hands slew him, and hanged him on a tree." But rising up unto a contempt of all the means of conviction and evidences of truth that God will grant us in this world, they cast themselves without that line of divine mercy and pardon which some of the others were encompassed withal. So is it with many at this day in the world, who with wicked hearts and blinded minds, in the pursuit of carnal lusts, voluntarily and obstinately embrace Mohammedanism, with an open renunciation of Christ and the gospel. Unto such persons there is nothing left but "a fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation which shall devour the adversaries." Not that I would cast all persons who may be actually hurried into this abomination under the same dreadful doom, seeing the case in general will admit of many circumstantial differences, if not altering the nature of the crime, yet disposing of things unto various events. Not only surprisals by mighty temptations, with dread and terror, so shaking the powers of nature as to intercept the influence of light and convictions of truth, do claim an exemption from a decretory determination under this sentence; but other cases may also be attended with some such alleviating circumstances as, preserving their minds and souls from *wilful malice*, leave room for the exercise of sovereign grace. I myself knew one, yea, was conversant with him, and assisting of him in the concerns of his soul, who in the Indies turned Mohammedan, was actually initiated by circumcision into their superstition, and lived in its outward practice a year or two, who yet was sincerely recovered unto repentance, and died in the faith of the Son of God.

Partial apostasy is every crime against the gospel which partakes of the nature of the other in any measure or degree; and whatever doth so makes an accession towards the guilt of "crucifying the Son of God afresh, and putting him to an open shame:" for it is in his gospel and church alone wherein he can now suffer from the sons of

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men. When any important principle of evangelical truth is forsaken and renounced, especially when many of them are so; when the rule of obedience which the gospel prescribeth is habitually neglected; when men believe otherwise than it teacheth, and live otherwise than it requireth,—there is a partial apostasy from it, whose guilt and danger answer the degrees and measures which in each kind it proceeds unto.

And this is that which we may charge, yea, which the Lord Christ in his word doth charge, on every nation under heaven where the gospel is publicly professed. Men are apt to please themselves, to approve of their own state and condition, wherein they have framed unto themselves rest and satisfaction. Churches content themselves with their outward order and administrations, especially when accompanied with secular advantages, and contend fiercely that all is well, and the gospel sufficiently complied withal, whilst their outward constitution is preserved and their laws of order kept inviolate. About these is the world filled with endless digladiations, wherein the most aim at no more but success in their especial contests. Only a few remain who fruitlessly complain that, under all these conflicts, the glory, power, and purity of Christian religion are lost in the world. And it is known that the judgment of Christ concerning churches, as unto their good or bad spiritual estate, is ofttimes very distant from their own concerning themselves. It was not only for their sakes, but as a warning unto all others in all ages, that it is entered on an everlasting record, that when the church of Laodicea judged and declared without hesitation that she was "rich, and increased with goods, and had need of nothing," the Lord Christ, "the Amen, the faithful and true witness," pronounced her "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." That things at this day are in no better a condition in many, in most churches in the world, is too evident to be denied with any pretence of reverence to the word of God, and it will be afterward made to appear.

Certainly the Lord Christ may say to the churches and nations among whom his name is yet owned in the world, what God said of old concerning that of the Jews, then his only church, "I had planted thee a noble vine, wholly a right seed: how then art thou turned into the degenerate plant of a wild vine unto me?" Jer. ii. 21. Yea, to most of them as in another place, "How is the faithful city become an harlot! it was full of judgment; righteousness lodged in it; but now murderers. Thy silver is become dross, thy wine mixed with water," Isa. i. 21, 22. The greatness of the evil complained of, the secret mystery of its accomplishment, the unreasonableness, folly, and ingratitude of the fact, the strangeness of the event, make the complaint to be formed into a scheme of admiration. And, indeed,

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if a man be able to consider the nature of the gospel, with the benefits communicated thereby unto mankind, he cannot but be astonished to find the generality of them to be so soon weary of it, and so ready on all occasions to relinquish it; for as future glory and a blessed immortality are attainable only thereby, so all that true freedom, tranquillity, peace, and blessedness, whereof our nature in this life is capable, are by no other means communicable unto the souls of men. In brief, whatever is of advantage in any gracious communication from God unto us,—without which we are nothing but the very worst and most malignant product of sin and misery,—it is all confined unto the gospel and the contents thereof. Wherefore, the carelessness of men in neglecting of it, their wickedness in its relinquishment as to its principles and obedience, may well be expressed as God doth in the inferior instance of the apostasy of the Jewish church: Jer. ii. 11, 12, "Hath a nation changed their gods, which are yet no gods? but my people have changed their glory for that which doth not profit. Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid, be ye very desolate, saith the LORD." Yet thus is it, and no otherwise, as we shall afterward manifest, amongst the generality of them that are called Christians in the world.

The church of Rome violently pleads an exemption from this charge by virtue of special privilege;—not an internal privilege of efficacious grace into their minds and wills, to preserve it and all that belongs unto it always in saving faith and obedience, wherein alone a compliance with the gospel consists; but an outward privilege of *indefectibility*, keeping them in the state the gospel requireth they know not how, but, as it were, whether they will or no!

But there is no party or society of men under heaven (considering the notoriety of matter of fact to the contrary) but can with less violence unto common modesty make use of this pretence. So when the Jews of old were charged by the prophets with apostasy from the law and the obedience which it required, with threats of destruction for their sins, they warded themselves from a conviction of guilt and fear of punishment by an unreasonable, yea, outrageous confidence in church privileges, then not only appropriated but confined unto them, crying out, "The temple of the LORD, The temple of the LORD, The temple of the LORD, are these." This they thought sufficient to repel the charge of the prophets, to vindicate their innocency, and secure their peace. The reply of the prophet unto them will equally serve in both cases, "Behold, ye trust in lying words, that cannot profit. Will ye steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and burn incense unto Baal, and walk after other gods whom ye know not; and come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, We are delivered to do all these abo-

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minations?" Jer. vii. 8–10. A plea of innocency and hope of impunity, under an evident guilt of the highest immoralities and the vilest of superstitions, do equally participate of folly and impudence.

It is fallen out with this church of Rome somewhat in like manner as it did with him from whom she falsely pretends to derive her wonderful privilege of indefectibility; for when our Lord Christ foretold that all men should forsake him, he alone, with the highest confidence and in a singular manner, undertook the contrary for himself. But all the prerogative which he pretended unto issued only in this, that when all the other disciples forsook their Master and fled, according to his prediction, he *alone* forsook him and *denied* him. And that impossibility of failing which this church appropriates unto itself as its singular and incommunicable privilege hath possibly been a means of, but assuredly is accompanied with, a peculiar apostasy, above all other churches in the world. Nothing, certainly, can be more vain in itself, nor more pernicious unto the souls of them who are under the power of such an apprehension, than this pretence, when all evidences in matter of fact do openly testify to the contrary. The principal nations of its communion are at this day engaged in fierce, bloody, and causeless wars, and these so managed as to be accompanied with a confluence of all those evils and flagitious wickednesses which have a tendency to make mankind sinful and miserable. Is this that love and peace which, according to the rule of the gospel, ought to be among the disciples of Christ, and without which it is impossible they should have any evidences in themselves, or give any testimony unto the world, that so they are? Doth this answer the promises to be accomplished in the days of the Messiah, Isa. ii. 2–4, or the innumerable precepts given by Jesus Christ himself as to unity, love, and peace? "But wars," they say, "are lawful, and so no argument that those engaged in them are revolters from the rule of the gospel." I say, It may be so; but it is far safer to judge all war unlawful than to justify all the wars that rage in Christendom, or to suppose them consistent with the rule or doctrine of the gospel. The truth is, many things must concur to reconcile any of them unto that obedience which we owe to the Prince of Peace; nor is any of them of that nature or necessity, but that, if the gospel had its proper efficacy on the minds of all that are called Christians, and its due authority over their consciences, they would be all prevented. However, in a church pretending to be no way fallen off or apostatized from the evangelical rule, it is justly expected that another *representation* be made of the religion taught by Jesus Christ than that which appears in the desolations that are wrought in the earth through the lusts and rage of the members of it. The state of things amongst them seems not to constitute that kingdom of

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righteousness, love, and peace, which Christ came to set up in the world, and which indeed at present, by reason of the general apostasy of the nations, is little elsewhere to be found but in the souls of his sanctified ones; and those particular churches are blessed in a peculiar manner who endeavour, in their profession and obedience, in any measure to rise up unto an expression thereof.

Besides, the lives of the generality of them who adhere unto the communion of that church, [and] of the most who preside therein, are openly contradictory unto the evangelical rule of obedience. It may for the most part be said concerning them with respect unto the whole, as one of them said of a part of the New Testament, "Either this is not gospel, or we are not Christians." In brief, if the kingdom of Christ,—which was once a kingdom of light, and truth, and holiness; of separation, in principles, affections, and conversation, from the world; of communion with God and loving-kindness among men; of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost,—may become, and is become, a kingdom of darkness, pride, ignorance, ambition, persecution, blood, superstition, and idolatry, then and not else doth it visibly remain among them, and they have nothing apostatized from the laws and government of it.

But they can easily discharge themselves of the guilt of this imputation: for notwithstanding that the things mentioned be in part acknowledged to be so, (as to what purpose is it to deny the sun to shine at noonday?) yet the peace, love, and unity, the holiness and righteousness, that ought, according to the gospel, to be and reside in the church, are found amongst them on other accounts;—for the whole body of the church and all the members of it agree and are united in one head, even the pope of Rome, which is the only evangelical unity required of the disciples of Christ! and the holiness of the worship, with that of the saints that have been among them, as also of their present retired devotionists, and the charity of many, testified by magnificent works of piety and bounty, do sufficiently answer that sanctification, holiness, and love, that conformity unto Christ in heavenly-mindedness and obedience, which the gospel requireth. But this is no other but an account of the true nature of that apostasy of the latter times which is foretold by the apostle, 2 Tim. iii. 1–5, "In the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce-breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof." Under the power of the most filthy and outrageous lusts, men frame to themselves an outward shape,

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image, and representation of holiness; they delineate a form of religion by a substitution of other things in the room of the life and substance of it, which are lost. The power of Christianity is openly denied in their being acted by the power of all those lusts which are contrary unto it; for the grace of God in the gospel teacheth them by whom it is received to "deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world." This men cannot more perfectly renounce than in being "foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another;" such persons being sufficiently remote from being "saved by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost." Whilst men live in this state and condition, wherein a complete denial or renunciation of the power of godliness or religion doth consist, if, to supply the absence thereof, they draw and take on themselves a scheme, form, and appearance of it, by the application of the names, offices, and properties of gospel effects unto outward, lifeless duties, or appearances of them, the apostasy foretold is completely accomplished. This is to let David go, and to foist an image covered with goats' hair in his stead; or at best, like Rehoboam, to make brazen shields in the room of those of gold taken away by Shishak. No otherwise doth the church of Rome deal in this matter. The power of faith, love, peace, holiness, conformity unto Christ, self-denial, and all the principles of a heavenly conversation, being lost and denied among the generality of its members, and all the real glory of Christianity thereby forfeited and despised, they have set up a form or image of it, wherewith they content themselves, and attempt to deceive others. Instead of that mystical, spiritual union with himself and among themselves which Christ prayed for and purchased for his disciples, they have substituted the *morphosis* or *mormo* of an agreement in professing subjection to the pope of Rome. For that heavenly *love* of one another in him, and for his sake, which he renews the souls of believers unto by his grace, we are presented in their profession with outward works of charity and bounty, measured and valued by the advantage which redounds unto the principal actors in this show. Peace (the great legacy of Christ unto his followers) with God in their own minds, with the whole creation not shut up under the curse, that comprehensive grace and mercy wherein is comprised all the blessedness which in this world we can be made partakers of, is preserved in the flourishing prosperity and temporal successes of the court of Rome. The internal, effectual operations of the Spirit of grace have the outward dispensations of ordinances shuffled in their place and stead; regeneration is baptism; growth in grace is episcopal confirmation; the application, by faith, of the blood of Christ, once

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offered in a holy sacrifice for us, must give way unto the daily sacrifice of the mass offered for the sins of the quick and the dead; disciplines and some outward bodily severities must supply the place of the mortification of sin, the power whereof is never more lost and denied than it is under the highest external pretences of it. So the whole work of the Spirit as a Spirit of grace and supplication in the church must be, and is unto themselves, satisfactorily represented by reading, saying, chanting with voices and musical instruments, prayers and praises invented and composed by they know not whom, and in a language which the most of those who are obliged to comply with them understand not at all.

And even the worst part of their image is in what they have fixed on as the delineation and representation of the rule and discipline of Christ in the gospel; for, rejecting that humble, holy, meek, diligent endeavour to preserve all the faithful in obedience, love, unity, and fruitful walking, by the application of the commands of Christ unto their souls and consciences through his Spirit, and with his authority, they have erected a worldly domination over God's heritage, in whose exercise more force, fraud, extortion, oppression, violence, and bloodshed, have been acted and perpetrated, than it may be in the secular government of any tyrannical state in the world.

Other instances of the like nature might be given. This is that *μόρφωσις τῆς εὐσεβείας*, or *ἀληθείας τῆς κατ' εὐσέβειαν*, that figure and representation of evangelical truth and holiness wherewith these men would countenance themselves in, and cover from others, that apostasy from the gospel which predominant lusts have cast them into and keep them under the power of, according as it was foretold it should come to pass in the latter days.

It is yet replied, "That whatever apprehensions others may have, or whatever judgment shall be made, of the predominant evils reigning among the generality of them, and their seeming inconsistency with the doctrine of the gospel, yet the promise of the Spirit to lead into all truth is not only granted but *confined* unto them, so as that they are eternally secured as to faith and belief, whatever other miscarriages they may fall into." And the nature of this plea is so effectual, that if it could be made good and confirmed on their behalf, notwithstanding I see not as yet how it is possible to solve other difficulties that occur in this case, yet would it with me determine all things in controversy between them and us. Let them but evince that they alone do inherit the promised Spirit of Christ exclusively unto all others,—that he dwells, resides, works, guides in and among them alone,—and in other things we will spare them the trouble of farther pleading their cause. But their pretence hereunto is impotent and contemptible; for what they insist upon amounts to no

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more but this, that they being "the church," the promise of giving the Spirit is made and fulfilled unto them alone; which only begs the matter that is in principal difference between us, and the disputes about it are endless. If, indeed, they argued, on the other hand, that they are the only church of Christ because they alone enjoy the promise of the Spirit, as the inference were undoubtedly certain (for it is the presence of Christ by his Spirit that gives being or existence unto the church), so the truth of the assertion were capable of an easy trial and a satisfactory determination; for where the Spirit doth so reside, according to the promise of Christ, and abide with any, as he doth with no others in the same kind, he will infallibly manifest his presence by his operations, and sufficiently evidence them with whom he is to be the church of Christ, seeing, as he is the promised Spirit of truth, the world cannot receive him. His operations are all of them either in a way of grace or gifts; and his gifts are either extraordinary or ordinary. When, therefore, those of the church of Rome can manifest that they enjoy such gracious operations of the Spirit as others enjoy nothing of the same kind, or that they are furnished and supplied with such spiritual gifts, either ordinary or extraordinary, as no others do participate of with them or besides them,—not proving it by saying they alone are "the church," and therefore it must be so, but by the evidence of the things themselves, as it was in the primitive times,—they shall not only free themselves from the charge of any dangerous apostasy from the gospel, but enjoy moreover all that their hearts can wish.

But this pretence hath been so often and so fully evinced of falsehood, and that by all means of conviction, in the examination of causes and effects (it being undeniably demonstrated that as no such promise was ever peculiarly made unto them, much less on such terms of security as they imagine, and that in the issue, as unto matter of fact, instead of being "led into all truth," they have departed almost from all), that it needs not again to be insisted on. And, indeed, such a promise as is pretended is altogether inconsistent with the glory and honour of the gospel of God. The word of the gospel,—that is, the truth contained therein,—is the sole external instrument of the reconciliation of sinners unto God, and of their walking before him in obedience unto his glory; other end and use it hath none. To give by irrevocable grant the possession of this truth, and not in order unto that end, and so to continue it whether ever that effect be produced or no, yea, where it is not, corresponds not with other fruits of the wisdom of God in the dispensation of his grace. And whereas the gospel, as to the nature of its doctrine, will and may be interpreted by its fruits and effects in the lives of men, to allow them the security of its truth on a supposition of a course of

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sin, and a continuance in a state of irreconciliation or enmity against God, is to expose the doctrine of it, and the law of obedience contained in it, to just censure and reproach.

Wherefore, notwithstanding these or any other pretences of an alike nature, we may safely proceed to show how the generality of Christians have partially apostatized from the gospel, and to inquire into the ways, means, causes, and reasons thereof.

CHAPTER III.

Apostasy from the mystery, truth, or doctrine of the gospel—Proneness of persons and churches thereunto—Proved by all sorts of instances.

THERE are three things in the gospel which are as the essentially constitutive parts of it:—1. The *mystery of its doctrine*, which is the *object* of faith; 2. The *holiness of its precepts*, which are the *matter* of our obedience; and, 3. The *purity of its institutions* of worship, which is the *trial* of our faith and obedience as to their profession. With respect unto these we are to make our inquiry, both as unto matter of fact, and as unto the reasons, causes, and occasions of it, in the apostasy from them that is in the world. Instances hereof, in every one of the particulars mentioned, we shall find in our own days, and those both deplorable and of ill abode.[1] But I shall not confine myself unto the present age, nor unto what is done or come to pass among ourselves, but consider things with respect unto the whole course and progress of religion since the first preaching and declaration of the gospel.

FIRST, The mystery of the truth or doctrine of the gospel, which is the object of our faith, is the *foundation* of its precepts and institutions, of the holiness it requireth and of the worship that it appointeth. Where this is forsaken, the others cannot be retained. Men may profess the truth, and yet not yield obedience unto it, Tit. i. 16, 2 Tim. iii. 5; but without the real belief of it, no man can be obedient as he ought. The obedience which the gospel requireth is the "obedience of faith," Rom. i. 5, or being "obedient to the faith," Acts vi. 7. It is this "grace of God" alone which "teacheth men to deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world," so as to find acceptance with God therein, Tit. ii. 11, 12. Wherever, therefore, this is rejected, renounced, forsaken, declined from by any, so far as it is so, so far there is and will be an apostasy from all other concernments of the gospel. This, therefore, we are to inquire into. And we shall find in our inquiry that all sorts of persons, all churches, are, and always have been, ex-

[1] Of evil omen.—ED.

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ceedingly prone to turn aside from the mystery and truth of the doctrine of the gospel, that they have done so accordingly, and that those which are now in the world continue to be of the same temper and inclination. And as it will appear that no evil practices are indulged unto on this supposition, so it is desirable that those who are secure in this matter, on such principles as wherewith they are satisfied, would not with too much severity reflect on them who cannot but be jealous over themselves and others. The great apostle himself makes this the principal ornament in the preparation of his triumph upon the success of his ministry, that he had "kept the faith:" 2 Tim. iv. 6–8, "I am," saith he, "now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day." Of all that made way for that triumphant glory which he now had a prospect of, he insists on this only in particular, that he had "kept the faith;" which he did not do without a severe warfare and conflict: so great a matter was that in his esteem, which most suppose so common, so easy, that little diligence or watchfulness is required thereunto. And the frequent solemn charges, with pathetical exhortations, which he gives unto his son Timothy to be careful herein, manifest both the weight he laid upon it, the difficulty that was in it, and the danger of miscarriage wherewith it was attended: 1 Tim. vi. 20, 21, "O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called: which some professing have erred concerning the faith." 2 Tim. i. 13, 14, "Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. That good thing which was committed unto thee keep by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us." And the same apostle expressly mentions the proneness of some to relinquish the truth of the gospel; whom, therefore, he would have rebuked sharply, "that they might be sound in the faith, not giving heed to Jewish fables and commandments of men, turning from the truth," Tit. i. 13, 14. Neither would there be any need that some should "earnestly contend for the faith once delivered unto the saints," Jude 3, but that others are very ready to corrupt it and turn away from it.

Examples of this state and event of things among all the churches in the world, since the first planting of them in and by the doctrine of the gospel, will give more evidence unto the truth of our assertion, and a clear account of that matter of fact, whose reasons and causes we are to inquire into. And because I would confine myself unto the full declaration of the mystery of Christ, I shall not insist on the church of the Jews under the old testament. But it is known unto

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all how, from their first transgression in making the golden calf,—whereon, as God complains, they quickly, in a few days, turned out of the way,—they were continually prone unto all sorts of apostasy; and in the issue, the generality of them fell off from the promise and covenant of Abraham by their unbelief, as the apostle declares, Rom. xi. And it is to be feared that the appearance and pretence of some Christian churches unto better success have this only advantage, that their ways and practices are not recorded by the Spirit of God, as theirs were. But I shall not insist on that instance.

Of all the churches that are or ever were in the world, those gathered and planted by the apostles themselves had the greatest advantage to know the mystery and truth of the gospel, and the most forcible reasons unto constancy and perseverance therein. Considering the ability of their teachers to reveal unto them "all the counsel of God," with their faithfulness in "withholding nothing that was profitable unto them," Acts xx. 18–21, 26, 27; their authority, as being sent immediately by Jesus Christ, and their absolute infallibility in all that they delivered; a man would rationally think that there were no room, no pretence, left for any to decline in the least from the doctrine wherein they were instructed by them, nor any advantage for Satan or seducers to practise upon them. There is no doubt but most of us suppose that had we been so taught by the apostles themselves, nothing could ever tempt us to doubt or waver, much less to relinquish any truth wherein we were so instructed. But, alas! this thought is not unlike the apprehension of the rich man in hell, who judged that if one rose from the dead to warn his brethren, they would repent and be converted unto God. But as Abraham told him, "if they would not believe Moses and the prophets, neither would they believe should one rise from the dead," no more would we, if we be not constant and steadfast in the doctrine of the gospel as revealed in the Scripture, be so, if we had been taught it by all the apostles together. An example of this proneness to relinquish evangelical principles we have in most of the churches called and gathered by them, whose faith and practice are recorded in their writings.

The church of Corinth was planted by the apostle Paul, and watered by Apollos, that great evangelist; and none can question but that they were fully instructed by them in all the principles of the gospel; which is evident also from that abundance of spiritual gifts which, above any other church, they had received. But yet, within a few years, before the writing of his first epistle unto them, which was not above five or six years at the most, many of them fell into that fundamental error of denying the resurrection of the dead; whereby they wholly annihilated, as the apostle declares, the whole

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death and resurrection of Christ, rendering what seemed to remain of their faith altogether vain, 1 Cor. xv. 12–18.

The churches of the Galatians are yet a more pregnant instance. Converted they were unto the faith of Christ and planted in their church-state by the ministry of the same apostle; and although he instructed them in the whole counsel of God, yet it may be justly supposed that he laboured in nothing more than to establish them in the knowledge and faith of the grace of God in Christ, and the free justification of believers by faith in him or his blood alone: for this he everywhere declareth to have been his principal aim and design, in the whole course of his ministry. The doctrine hereof they received with so much joy and satisfaction that they valued the apostle as an angel of God, received him as Jesus Christ, and esteemed him above the sight of their own eyes, chap. iv. 14, 15. But yet after all this, upon a sudden, so as that he was surprised with it and amazed at it, they fell from the doctrine of grace and justification by faith alone, to seek after righteousness as it were by the works of the law: Chap. iii. 1, "O foolish Galatians," saith he, "who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you?" Notwithstanding the evident demonstration of the truth which they had received, and experience of the power of the word, which he mentions, verse 2, yet all on a sudden they *apostatized* from it. And as the foundation hereof lay in the uncured folly and vanity of their minds (as we shall see afterward that it doth in all alike cases), yet the strangeness of the manner of it, that it should be so *sudden*, and, it may be, *universal*, makes him ask if there were not some *strange fascination* or spiritual witchcraft in it. So have we seen persons among ourselves, who in a day or two have renounced all those principles of truth wherein they have been instructed, and embraced a system of notions diametrically opposite unto them, insomuch as some have supposed that there hath been a real diabolical fascination in the matter. Now, this apostasy of the Galatians was such as the apostle peremptorily declares that Christ and all the benefits of his death were renounced therein.

Wherefore, although we may be troubled at it and bewail it, that sundry persons are so ready to fall off from the same truth in the same manner, yet ought we not to think strange of it or be moved by it, seeing that whole churches called and instructed therein, and that particularly, by the apostle himself, did so fall in a short time after their first plantation.

It is more than probable that those who endeavoured to make a spoil of the Colossians "by philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men," chap. ii. 8, had no small success among them. And

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such things they were wherewith they were attempted and beguiled as took them off from "holding the Head," turning them aside unto the curious speculations of men "vainly puffed up by their own fleshly minds," verses 18, 19. Things of the like nature may be observed in most of the other churches unto whom the epistles are directed.

And in those unto particular persons, as unto Timothy and Titus, he warns them of this readiness of all sorts of persons to apostatize from the truth, giving express instances in some by name who had done so themselves, and sedulously endeavoured the overthrow of the faith of others. The holy apostle John lived to see more of these woful turnings aside from the truth and relinquishments of evangelical mysteries. Hence in his epistles he gives an account expressly of the apostasies that were among professors of the gospel, of the seducers, and their pretences whereby they were promoted, warning believers of the danger thereof, and of sundry duties incumbent on them necessary to their preservation. And the Epistle of Jude is written to the same purpose. It is known, also, how most of the churches unto whom the Lord Jesus Christ granted the favour of his visitation, wherein he tried and judged their state and condition, their stability in and declensions from the truth, were found guilty by him as to some degrees of backsliding and apostasy, for which they were severely reproved.

Certainly we can never enough admire the profound negligence and security of most churches and professors in the world with respect unto a due adherence unto the mysteries and truths of the gospel. Some think that they have such a privilege as that they can never decline from them or mistake about them, nor have done so in the long tract of sixteen hundred years, although they have been plunged into all manner of wickedness and carnal security. Others are wanton and careless under their profession, making little difference between truth and error; or, however, suppose that it is no great achievement to abide in the truth wherein they have been instructed. And these things have brought most churches and places under the power of that apostasy which shall afterwards be discovered. But if the churches thus planted by the apostles themselves were liable unto such defections, and many of them did actually, at least for a season, fall away from most important doctrines of the gospel (from whence, it may be, they had never been recovered if healing had not been timely applied by apostolical authority and wisdom), can we, who have not their advantages, nor some of the evidences of the truth which they enjoyed, having all the same causes of apostasy, inward and outward, which they had to be tried withal, expect that we shall be preserved, unless we watchfully and

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carefully attend unto all the ways and means whereby we may so be? But these things will be spoken unto afterward.

We may, in the next place, inquire what was the state of the churches after the ending and finishing of the sacred records, and the death of the apostles with all other persons divinely inspired. Here some would have us believe that all things were well, at least for a long season, and some that they are so to this very day. All that was believed and practised among them must be esteemed almost as sacred as the gospel itself, and be made a part of the rule of our faith and worship. It seems those very churches which, during the days of the apostles, and whilst they were under their inspection, were so prone to mistakes, to follow their own imaginations, or comply with the inventions of others, yea, in sundry instances so as to apostatize from the most important doctrines of the gospel, were all on a sudden, on no other advantage but being delivered from apostolical care and oversight, so changed, established, and confirmed, that they declined not in any thing from the truth and rule of the gospel. For my part, I pay as great a respect and reverence unto the primitive churches of the first, second, and third centuries, as I think any man living can justly do; but that they did in nothing decline from the grace, mystery, truth, or rule of the gospel, that they gave no admittance unto "vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world," there are such evidences unto the contrary as none can believe it but those who have a great mind it should be so, and [have] their credulity at their disposal. I shall therefore briefly inquire what was foretold that would ensue among those churches, and what came to pass accordingly.

The apostle Paul tells the elders of the church of Ephesus that "he knew that after his departing grievous wolves would enter in among them, not sparing the flock," Acts xx. 29. Though he compares them to devouring wolves, yet are they not bloody persecutors by external force that he doth intend; for that expression, "Shall enter in among you," denotes an admission into the society and converse of the church, under pretence of the same profession of religion. They are, therefore, heretics and seducers, who lie in wait to deceive through various sleights and cunning craftiness, being not (whatever they pretended) really of the church, not of the flock of sheep, no, not in profession, but devouring wolves. The same persons are intended who by Peter are called "false teachers," such as should "privily bring in damnable heresies, denying the Lord that bought them," 2 Pet. ii. 1. But the apostle adds, moreover, in the next place, "Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them," Acts xx. 30. I do not think that the apostle in that expression, "Also of your own selves," intended

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precisely any of those who were then personally present with him, or at least it is not necessary that we should so judge; but some that were quickly to succeed in their room and office are intended. And all the perverse things which they would teach, being contradictory to the doctrine of the gospel, contained some degrees of apostasy in them. That they prevailed in this attempt, that the church was leavened and infected by them, is evident from hence, that not long after that church is charged by our Saviour to be fallen in sundry things from its first purity, Rev. ii. 4, 5. So he assures Timothy that the time would come, and that speedily, as appears by the prescription he makes for its prevention, 2 Tim. iv. 1, 2, that men "would not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts should heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears;" whereby they should "be turned from the truth, and be turned unto fables," verses 3, 4;—a plain prediction of that defection from evangelical truth and purity which was to befall the churches, and did so. And this, with the danger of it, he doth more vehemently urge, as from a spirit of prophecy, 1 Tim. iv. 1, 2, "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils." By that phrase of speech, "The Spirit speaketh expressly," the apostle understands not a plain, distinct revelation made thereof unto himself alone, but that the infallible Spirit of God, whereby himself and the rest of the apostles were guided, did everywhere testify the same. It is an expression not unlike that he useth, Acts xx. 23, "The Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city;" that is, in all places those who were divinely inspired agreed on the same prediction.

And I judge the apostles did everywhere, by joint consent, acquaint the churches that after the gospel had been received and professed for a while, there would ensue a notable apostasy from the truth and worship of it. So Jude tells them, verses 17, 18, that "the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ told them that in the last time there should be mockers, who should walk after their ungodly lusts." This all the apostles agreed in the prediction of, and warned all the churches concerning it. So John expresseth it, 1 Epist. iv. 3, "This is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come." He speaks of the coming of antichrist, and therewithal an apostasy from the faith, as that which they had been fully instructed in. And the apostle Paul mentioneth it as that which not only they were forewarned of, but also acquainted with some particulars concerning; which it was not, it may be, convenient in those days to mention publicly, for fear of offence. "There must," saith he, "be a falling away," or an apostasy from the faith, under the leading of "the man of sin." And saith he, "Remember ye not, that, when I

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was yet with you, I told you these things? and now ye know what withholdeth," 2 Thess. ii. 3, 5, 6. He had both told them of the apostasy, and also acquainted them with one particular about it, which he will not now mention. This being the great testimony of the Spirit of God in those days, that the visible church should so fall away from the faith, one of the chief ways whereby Satan brought it to pass was by the advancing of a contrary revelation and principle, —namely, that this or that church, the church of Rome for instance, was infallible and indefectible, and could never fall away from the faith. By this means he obliterated out of the minds of men the former warnings given by the Spirit unto the churches, so rendering them secure, defeating the ends of the prediction; for hereby he not only led men insensibly into the greatest apostasy, but taught them to adhere invincibly unto what they had done, and with the highest confidence to justify themselves therein. But all those and many other warnings did the Holy Ghost give concerning the defection from the mystery of the gospel which the churches would in succeeding times fall into; which being neglected by secure professors, whilst their faith was weakened and undermined by innumerable artifices, issued in their apostasy. For these things being thus expressly foretold by the Spirit of God himself, we may briefly inquire into the event of the predictions mentioned, and whether indeed they came to pass or no.

An account in general of the state of the church after the days of the apostles we have given us by Hegesippus, who lived in the next age after them, as his words are recorded by Eusebius, lib. iii. cap. 32. Relating the martyrdom of Simon, the son of Cleopas, he adds: "Unto these times the church continued a pure and incorrupted virgin, those who endeavoured to corrupt the rule of saving truth, where any such were, lying hid in obscurity. But after that the holy company of the apostles came to their several ends, and that generation was past who heard the divine Wisdom with their own ears, a conspiracy of wicked error, by the seductions of those that taught strange doctrines, began to take place; and when none of the apostles were remaining, they began to set up their science, falsely so called, with open face against the preaching of the truth." We have already seen that there were many declensions in the days of the apostles themselves; but as they were jealous over all the churches with godly jealousy,—for having "espoused them to one husband," they took care "to present them as a chaste virgin unto Christ" (the words which Hegesippus alludes unto), and thereon watched against all ways and means whereby as "the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, their minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ," by the teaching of other doctrines than

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what they had received from them, as Paul speaks, 2 Cor. xi. 2–4, —so by their wisdom, diligence, and watchfulness, they were for the most part soon reduced from their wanderings and recovered from their mistakes. Hence this holy man pronounceth the church a pure virgin during the days of the apostles and their inspection, at least comparatively as to what ensued thereon, for immediately after he acknowledgeth that they were much corrupted and defiled,—that is, fallen off from "the simplicity that is in Christ,"—intending, probably, those very things wherein after ages made them their example; for things quickly came unto that state in the world, and which yet with the most continueth therein, that men desired no greater warranty for their practice in religion than the shadow or appearance of any thing that was in use or prevailed among those churches, though themselves therein went off evidently from the simplicity that is in Christ.

This account and unquestionable testimony we have in general of the accomplishment of the predictions before mentioned, concerning a declension that was to ensue from the power, purity, and simplicity of the gospel. But whatever is here intended, it must be looked on as the very beginning and entrance of the apostasy that ensued; which can scarce be taken notice of in comparison of that excess which it quickly proceeded unto. In particular, the parts of the sacred predictions mentioned may be reduced unto four heads:—1. "Men from among themselves speaking perverse things." 2. "Grievous wolves entering in, not sparing the flock." 3. Weariness, and "not enduring of sound doctrine," but turning the mind unto fables, and from the truth. 4. A gradual, secret, mysterious work of a general apostasy in the whole visible church. And it might be easily demonstrated by instances how all these had their particular accomplishment, until the whole apostasy foretold was formed and completed. We may give some short remarks upon them all:—

1. It cannot be denied but that many of the principal teachers in the first ages of the church after the apostles, especially among those whose writings remain unto posterity, did, in a neglect of the gospel and its simplicity, embrace and teach sundry things, perverse, curious, and contrary to the form of wholesome words committed unto them; whilst, for any thing that appears, they were not so duly conversant in evangelical mysteries, with reverence and godly fear, as it was their duty to have been. It is known how instances hereof might be multiplied out of the writings of Justin Martyr, Irenæus, Clemens, Origen, Tatianus, Athenagoras, Tertullian, Lactantius, and others; but I shall not reflect with any severity on their names and memories who continued to adhere unto the fundamental principles of Christian religion, though, what by curious speculations, what by

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philosophical prejudices and notions, by wrested allegorical expositions of Scripture, by opinions openly false and contradictory to the word of God, they much corrupted and debased the pure and holy doctrine of Jesus and his apostles.

2. The "grievous wolves" foretold of, who were to "spoil the flock," I look on as heretics in their various kinds. And on this account it would seem to exceed all belief what multitudes and shoals of all sorts of persons fell off from the mystery and truth of the gospel, after they had been declared unto them and professed by them, which is a full confirmation of the assertion before laid down. But they may in general be reduced unto two heads:—

(1.) Of those who, in a regardlessness and contempt of the gospel which they had received and professed, fell away unto foolish, extravagant, heathenish imaginations, unintelligible endless fancies, for the most part (as is supposed) accompanied with wicked practices, whereby, although they would retain the name of Christians, they completely and absolutely fell off from Christ and his gospel. Such were the Gnostics in all their branches and under their several appellations, Marcionites, Manichees, and others almost innumerable, with whose names, rise, opinions, and course of lives, Epiphanius, Austin, and Philastrius, have filled up their catalogues. It may be said, "They were all of them persons of so great abominations that they deserve no consideration among such as own Christian religion." But the greater the abominations were which they fell into, the more wild, senseless, and wicked were their imaginations, considering the multitudes of professed Christians which fell into them, the more effectual is the testimony they give unto the truth of our assertion; for were there not an inexpressible proneness in the minds of men to relinquish the mystery of the gospel, were it not promoted by unutterable folly and secret enmity against the truth, would it have been possible that so early in the church, taking date immediately from the decease of the apostles, such multitudes of professed Christians should openly renounce those sacred truths for such noxious, foolish imaginations? These are they who are expressly prophesied of, that they should "bring in damnable heresies, denying the Lord that bought them, and bringing upon themselves swift destruction, many following their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth was to be evil spoken of," 2 Pet. ii. 1, 2: for all their impious opinions and practices were by the heathen objected unto, and charged on Christian religion, as is evident in Origen's reply to Celsus, among others; and so by reason of them "the way of truth was evil spoken of."

(2.) There was another sort of heresies, and so of real apostasy from the mystery of the gospel, whose authors and followers yet pretended an adherence unto and profession thereof. And these may

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be reduced to two heads:—[1.] Concerning the *person;* and, [2.] Concerning the *grace* of Christ. Of the first sort, the principal and most prevalent was that of the Arians in denying his deity; of the latter, that of the Pelagians in opposing his satisfaction, merit, and grace. The first of these was poured out as a flood from the mouth of the old serpent, and bare all before it like a torrent; the latter insinuated itself as poison into the very vitals of the church. The first, as a burning fever, carried present death with it and before it; the latter, as a gangrene or hectical distemper, insensibly consumed the vital spirits of religion. In the first we have a most woful evidence of the instability of professors, and their readiness to forego the saving mysteries of the gospel; for in little more than half an age after its first rise, the generality of Christians in the world, bishops, priests, and people, fell under the power of it, and in their public confessions renounced and denied the true eternal deity of the Son of God: for, having obtained the patronage of some emperors, as Constantius and Valens, and the suffrage of innumerable prelates, who jointly promoted this heresy by force and fraud, almost the whole world, as to outward profession, was for a season led into this apostasy, wherein some whole nations (as the Goths and Vandals) continued for sundry ages afterward. And for the latter, or Pelagianism, it secretly, subtilely, and gradually, so insinuated itself into the minds of men, that, for the substance of it, it continues to be no small part of that religion which the generality of Christians do at this day profess, and is yet upon a prevalent progress in the world.

This is the second way of the apostasy of professors which was foretold by the Holy Ghost, which so came to pass as that the wounds which Christianity received thereby are not healed unto this day.

3. Another way was, that men should grow *weary of sound doctrine,* and not being able, for the reasons afterward to be insisted on, to endure it any longer, should hearken after fables, and be turned away from the truth. And this no less eminently came to pass than any of the former. About the third century it was that monkish fables began to be broached in the world. And this sort of men, instead of the doctrines of the grace of God, of justification by the blood of Christ, of faith and repentance, of new obedience and walking before God according to the commands of Christ and rule of the gospel, which men grew weary of and could not well longer endure, filled their minds and satisfied their itching ears with stories of dreams and visions, of angelical perfection in themselves, of self-invented devotions, of uncommanded mortifications, and a thousand other foolish superstitions. By such fables were innumerable souls turned from the truth and simplicity of the gospel, thinking that in these things alone religion consisted, despising the whole doctrine of

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our Lord Jesus Christ and his apostles in comparison of them. These are particularly prophesied of and declared, 1 Tim. iv. 1–3. By the hypocrisy and lies, fabulous stories and doctrines of devils, of this sort of men, the body of the Christian people was so leavened and infected with the belief of vain delusions and the practice of foolish superstitions that little or nothing was left sound or wholesome among them.

4. Lastly, The secret working of the "mystery of iniquity," in, under, and by all these ways, and other artifices innumerable, which the subtlety of Satan, with the vanity of the minds and lusts of the hearts of men, made use of, wrought out that fatal apostasy which the world groaned under and was ruined by when it came unto its height in the Papacy. The rise and progress of this catholic defection, the ways, means, and degrees of its procedure, its successful advance in several ages, have been so discovered and laid open by many, so far as the nature of so mysterious a work is capable of a discovery in this world, that I shall not need to repeat here any instance of it. In brief, the doctrine of the gospel was so depraved, and the worship of it so far corrupted, that the waters of the sanctuary seemed, like the river Jordan, to run and issue in a dead sea, or, like those of Egypt, to be turned into blood, that would yield no refreshment unto the souls of men. So was that prophetical parable of our Saviour fulfilled, Luke xix. 12–15, etc.

Before I proceed to particulars among ourselves in this kind, I shall yet farther confirm our assertion in general by the consideration of the second venture, if I may so say, that God gave the gospel in the world, the second trial which he hath made of many churches and nations, and what hath been the event and success thereof.

During the season spoken of the church was driven into the wilderness, as to its visible profession, where it was secretly nourished by the Spirit and word of God, and the few witnesses unto the truth which yet remained prophesied in sackcloth, ofttimes sealing their testimony (whereby the world was disquieted and tormented) with their blood. But when the time came that God would again graciously visit the remnant of his inheritance, he stirred up, gifted, and enabled many faithful servants of Christ, by whom the work of reformation was successfully begun and carried on in many nations and churches. It is true, they arrived not therein at the purity and peace of the apostolical churches; nor was it by some of them absolutely aimed at. And this quickly manifested itself by the great differences that were among them both in doctrine and worship; whereon those mutual contests and divisions ensued which proved the principal means of obstructing the progress of their whole work,

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and continueth to do so to this very day. But a state of a blessed and useful recovery it was from that apostasy into errors, heresies, superstitions, and idolatries, which the whole professing church of these parts of the world was fallen into. And many ways did it manifest itself so to be. For,—

1. The *doctrine* taught by them generally was *agreeable to the Scripture*, which they strenuously vindicated from the corruptions of the foregoing apostasy, and the worship of the churches was freed from open idolatry.

2. The *consciences of men*, pressed, harassed, and distorted with innumerable vain affrightments, superstitions, foolish imaginations, and false opinions, whereby they were brought into bondage to their pretended guides of all sorts, and forced unto services, under the name of religious duties, merely subservient unto their carnal interests, were *set at liberty* by the truth, and directed into the ways of gospel obedience.

3. Multitudes had it *given unto them* on the behalf of Christ, not only to *believe* in him, but also to *suffer* for him; so that no less numbers sealed their testimony with their blood, under the power of those who undertook the patronage of the present apostasy, than did under the rage of the heathens at the first introduction of Christian religion into the world.

4. The *fruit* which it hath brought forth in many nations, by the *real conversion* of multitudes to God, their edification and holy obedience, their solid spiritual consolation in life and death, with many other things, do give testimony unto this work that it was of God.

It cannot therefore be denied but that many churches were by the reformation brought into a state of revalescency or recovery from that mortal disease they had been under the power of. But all men know what care and diligence is required to attain perfect health and soundness in such a condition, and to prevent a relapse; which if it should fall out, the last error would be worse than the first. It might therefore have been justly expected from them, and it was their duty, to have gone on in the work of reformation until they had come to a perfect recovery of spiritual health. But instead thereof, things are so fallen out (by whose default God knows) that not only the work hath received little or no improvement among themselves, in the increase of light, truth, and holiness, nor been progressive or successful in the world towards others, but also hath visibly and apparently lost its force, and gone backwards on all accounts. Wherefore, we have here also another sad evidence of the proneness of men to forego the truths of the gospel after they have been instructed in them. I shall instance only in the known doctrines

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of the reformed churches, aiming especially at what is of late years fallen out among ourselves in a sort of men whom the preceding generations were unacquainted withal, which I shall therefore insist on apart and by itself afterward.

It is not unknown how ready many, yea, multitudes, are in all places to desert the whole protestant faith and religion, casting themselves into the baffled, prostituted remainders of the old apostasy. Every slight occasion, every temptation of pleasure, profit, favour, preferment, turns men unto the Papacy; and some run the same course merely to comply with the vanity of their minds in curiosity, novelty, and conformity unto what is in fashion among men. Some flee unto it as a sanctuary from guilt, as that which tendereth more ready ways for the pacification of conscience than that faith and repentance which the gospel doth require. Some having lost the sense of all religion in the pursuit of their lusts, finding themselves uneasy in their atheism, or disadvantaged by the reputation of it, take shelter in the Roman dress. Some are really entangled and overcome by the power and subtlety of numerous seducers who lie in wait to deceive. By one way and means or another, on motives known to themselves and him who useth them as his engines to subvert the faith, many in all places fall off daily to the Papacy, and the old superstition seems to be upon a new advance, ready to receive another edition in the world; yea, it is to be feared that there is in many places such a general inclination unto a defection, or such an indifferency to all religion, that multitudes want nothing but a captain to conduct them back into Egypt: for whereas they have lost all sense of the power, use, and excellency of that religion, or profession of truth, wherein they have been educated and instructed, and that by giving up themselves unto their lusts and pleasures, which will not fail to produce that cursed effect, they either embrace the Roman religion, to supply the place of that no-religion which they had left unto themselves, or if they pretend to soar to such a pitch of reason as to disown the vanity and folly of that profession, and its inconsistency with all the principles of free, generous, and rational minds, they betake themselves for a while unto a kind of sceptical atheism, which, having given them a sorry talkative entertainment for a little space, by debasing and corrupting their minds, gives them up again unto what they did before despise. By such means are the numbers of apostates multiplied amongst us every day.

But there are yet other instances of the proneness of men in foregoing the faith that the church was retrieved unto at the first reformation. How great an inroad hath been made on our first profession, at least an alteration made therein (whether for better or for worse the great day will discover), by that system of doctrines which from

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its author, and for distinction's sake, is called Arminianism! I am not bound to believe what Polinburgh affirms in his preface to the second part of Episcopius' works, namely, "That the most of the prelates and learned men in England are of their way and judgment," which, as stated by Episcopius, hath many Racovian additions made unto what it was at first; nay, I do believe that what he asserts is false and calumnious unto the persons he intends;—but yet I wish withal that too much countenance were not given by many unto his insinuation.

A late writer,[1] in a treatise which he calls "A sober and compassionate Inquiry," etc., among other things of the like nature, fancieth that some dislike the church of England on the account of its doctrine; and this they do, as he farther supposeth, because it "doth not so punctually agree with the synod of Dort as they could wish." To evidence the unreasonableness hereof, he informs us, "That no one father or writer of the church, whether Greek or Latin, before St Austin's time, agreed in doctrine with the determinations of that synod; and as for St Austin, he was a devout, good man, but whose piety was far more commendable than his reason;"—and therefore he rejects it with indignation (as he well may), that "a novel Dutch synod should prescribe doctrines to the church of England, and outweigh all antiquity;" and so closeth his discourse with some unworthy calumnies cast on the divines of that assembly, which were esteemed of the best that all the reformed churches of Europe (that of France alone excepted) could afford at that time.

But the interest of the present design which he had in hand was more regarded in these assertions than that of the truth. It is but a pretence, that those whom he reflects upon do dislike the doctrine of the church of England; for, look upon it as it is contained in the Articles of Religion, the Books of Homilies, and declared in the authenticated writings of all the learned prelates and others for sixty years after the reformation, wherein the doctrine taught, approved, and confirmed in this church was testified unto all the world, and the generality of those reflected on by him do sacredly adhere unto it. It is a defection from this doctrine that is by some complained of, and not the doctrine itself. And how the doctrine of the person before mentioned, or of Curcellæus,—of whose works Limborch, in his preface unto them, boasts that they were so earnestly desired in England,—can be brought into a consistency with that of this church so confirmed and declared, will require a singular faculty in the reconciliation of open multiplied contradictions, and those in the

[1] Dr Goodman, rector of Hadham, who published, in 1674, "An Inquiry into the Causes of the Present Separation from the Church of England." He was answered by Vincent Alsop in his "Melius Inquirendum."—Ed.

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most weighty points of religion, to declare. Let but the doctrine established at the first reformation, as explained and declared in the writings of the principal persons who presided, lived, and died in the communion of this church,—which are the measure of it in the judgment of all other churches in the world,—be continued and adhered unto, and there will be neither difference nor complaint on this matter. For the disputes which have been, and which it may be always will be, among learned men, concerning some abstruse and philosophical notions about the order of the divine decrees, predetermination, the nature of human liberty, and the like innumerable, neither ever did nor ever will much disturb the peace of the church; for as they are understood by very few, if by any at all, so the community of Christians are altogether unconcerned with them, either as to their faith or obedience. Differences about them will be ended at the last day; and it may be, as to the great end of the gospel, that is time enough.

But the pretence of this author, "That no one father or writer of the church, Greek or Latin, before St Austin's time, agreed with the determinations of the synod of Dort," is of little importance in this cause; for as I suppose he may not speak this absolutely on his own trial and experience, but rather on the suggestions of others, so it is no more than what is strongly pretended concerning the doctrine of the holy Trinity itself with respect unto the determination and declaration made of it at the council of Nice. And it were to be wished that too much countenance had not been given unto this imagination by Petavius and some others, whose collections of ambiguous expressions out of the ancient writers of the church, and observations upon them, are highly boasted of by our present Photinians. And as, it may be, it will not be easy for this author positively to declare what was the judgment of any one ancient writer on all points of Christian belief, especially on such as had not received an especial discussion from oppositions made unto them in their own days or before them: so it is confessed by all that an allowance is to be given unto general expressions of such writers as seem occasionally to declare their present thoughts on any particular doctrines about which there had never been any controversy in the church; for the proper signification of words themselves, whereby men express their minds, is never exactly stated until the things themselves which they would signify have been thoroughly discussed. Hence the same words have had various uses and divers significations in several ages. And by this rule, whatever be supposed that none of the ancients before Austin were of the same mind with those who assembled at Dort, it may with more truth be affirmed that none of them were otherwise minded but Origen only, and those who were

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influenced by him, he being by many, on evident grounds, accused to have prepared the way and opened the door both unto Arianism and Pelagianism.

The censure passed on Austin, namely, "That his piety was far more commendable than his reason," is at least as novel as the Dutch synod; for it is not the commendation of his piety, but the disparagement of his reason, that is intended. And I must take the liberty to say, that either this author hath not been much conversant in the writings of this great and holy person, or he is a very incompetent judge of the rational abilities of them in whose writings he is conversant. This confidence in pronouncing a censure so contrary to the concurrent sense of the generality of learned men of all sorts in the church for twelve hundred years savours too much of partiality and prejudice. But it is some relief, that the adversaries of the truth with whom he had to do were never able to discover nor make advantage of the weakness of his reason. It was sufficient for the work whereunto God designed him; which was, not only to check and suppress the many instances wherein sundry crafty persons apostatized from the truths of the gospel, both in his own days and before, but also to give over the light of truth, clearly discovered and strenuously vindicated, unto posterity, for the benefit of the church in all ages. Persons may freely despise the men of their present contests, against whom they have all the advantages which may prompt them thereunto, and they have so much countenance in casting contemptuous reflections on the principal first reformers as not to think therein they invade the bounds of Christian modesty; but what will be the apology for their confidence in such censures of the rational abilities of Austin I cannot conjecture, though the reason of it I can easily guess at. However, it needeth not be much taken notice of, seeing a censure somewhat more severe hath not long since been passed on St Paul himself, by a writer of the same strain and judgment.

There is little ground of fear, as I suppose, that a "novel Dutch synod," as it is called, though consisting of persons delegated from all the principal reformed churches of Europe (that of France only excepted), "should prescribe doctrines to the church of England," seeing in that synod the church of England did rather prescribe doctrines to the Dutch than receive any from them; for the divines which had the pre-eminence of suffrage and authority in that assembly were those of the church of England, sent thither by public authority to testify the doctrine of this church, and to lead the Dutch into the same confession with themselves.

But to return; it is to be feared that as Pelagianism, in its first edition, did secretly and gradually insinuate itself into the ani-

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mal and vital spirits of the body of the church in those days, proving a poison unto it, so under its new varnish and gilding it will be received, until it diffuse itself into the veins and vitals of the present reformed church-state in the world. This I know, that some pretending a zeal for holiness and reformation of life do yet, with a shameful partiality, charge those doctrines as a principal means of the decay of piety, which they cannot but know were generally believed and avowed then when piety most flourished in this nation. But this is part of that entertainment which the church of England meets with at this day from her degenerate offspring. The doctrine of all the ancient bishops must be traduced, as the means of the decay of piety; and, which increaseth the wonder, it had not this effect till it began to be publicly deserted and renounced! for whether they are the one the cause of the other or no, yet there is a demonstrative coincidence between the originals of our visible apostasy from piety and the admission of these novel opinions, contrary to the faith of the first reformed churches, and that they both bear the same date among us.

But there is yet a greater abomination effectually taking place among us, to the utter overthrow of the faith of some, and the corrupting of the minds of others from the truth of the gospel. This is the leprosy of Socinianism, which secretly enters into the walls and timber of the house, whence it will not be scraped out. It commenced in the world some time before the other spring of a partial apostasy before mentioned; but for a good space it lay fermenting in some obscure places of Poland and the countries adjacent. When the books and writings of the authors and promoters of the opinions called by that name came once to be known and read in other places, they were continually all of them abundantly answered and confuted by learned men of all sorts, so as it was justly hoped it would obtain no great success or progress in the world. But,—

> "Latius excisæ serpit contagio gentis
> Victoresque suos natio victa premit."

The vanity of the minds of men, their weariness of sound doctrine, which they will endure no longer, whatever they embrace, have given it admission, either in part or in whole, among multitudes who once professed the faith of the gospel: for whereas the whole system of the opinions of those men is but a collection of such errors as formerly perplexed the church and overthrew the faith of many, the principal and most material of them may be referred unto two heads,—1. Photinianism; and, 2. Pelagianism. Unto the first are referred their denial of the Trinity, and consequently of the divine person and incarnation of the Son of God. Under the latter, their opposi-

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tion unto the satisfaction of Christ, the true nature of his priesthood and sacrifice, justification by faith in his blood and the imputation of his righteousness, the efficacy of his grace, and the corruption of our nature by the fall, may be comprised. The denial of the resurrection of the same bodies, the eternity of the punishment of the damned in hell, with other of their imaginations, were also traduced from some of old. The first part of their heresy as yet takes no great place but only among themselves, the doctrine opposite unto it being secured by law, and the interest of men therein who have advantage by the public profession. But yet it is to be feared that the coldness of many in asserting and defending those fundamental doctrines of the gospel which they oppose, yea, their indifferency about them, and the horrid notions, with strange expositions, that some have embraced and do use concerning the person of Christ, do proceed from some secret influence on the minds of men, which the venom of their opinions and sophistical disputes have had upon them. And from a just improvement of their sentiments have proceeded those bold efforts of atheistical imaginations and oppositions unto the Scripture, both the letter and sense of it, which have of late been divulged in public writings; which, being brought from the neighbour nation, do find no slack entertainment by many among us.

But as to the latter branch of their profession, or their Pelagianism, it hath diffused itself among multitudes of persons who were some time of another persuasion, and have yet engagements on them so to be. All that unreasonable advancement of reason in matters of religion which we have amongst us; the new notions men have of the satisfaction of Christ, pretending to the acknowledgment of it, indeed destructive unto it; the noisome conception of the little use of the person of Christ in religion beyond the revelation and confirmation of the gospel; doctrines of the possibility, yea, facility of yielding acceptable obedience unto all evangelical commands without the aids of effectual grace, of the powers and incorruption of our nature, of justification by and upon our own obedience, of the suitableness of all gospel mysteries to unrenewed reason or an unsanctified mind, of regeneration as consisting only in the reformation of our lives; with a rejection of all internal real efficacy in converting grace, and the substitution of morality in the room of grace; with the denial of any influences of grace from Jesus Christ unto the holiness of truth; and many other opinions wherewith men even pride themselves, to the contempt of the doctrine received and established in the reformed churches of old,—are borrowed out of the storehouses of their imaginations, shall I say, or raked out of their dunghill. And whither the infection may diffuse itself I know not. The resurrection of the same bodies substantially, the subsistence and acting of the soul in

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its separate state and condition, the eternity of hell torments, the nature of Christ's sacerdotal office as distinguished from his regal, begin to be either questioned or very faintly defended amongst many. And many other noisome opinions there are, about the Scriptures, the nature of God, his attributes and decrees, the two covenants, our union with Christ, the gifts and operations of the Spirit, which some vent as pure mysteries and discoveries of truth, and value themselves for being the authors or maintainers of them, that came all from the same forge, or are emanations from the same corrupt fountain of Socinianism.

We have, as I suppose, sufficiently demonstrated the truth of what we before observed concerning the proneness and readiness of mankind to relinquish and fall off from the mystery and doctrine of the gospel, after it hath been declared unto them and received by them. Withal we have stated the matter of fact,—namely, that such a defection there hath been, and is in the world at this day; the reasons and causes whereof we are now to inquire into. Only I must premise, that the principal instance designed, and which is among ourselves, I have referred to an especial consideration by itself, wherein we shall inquire into the especial reasons of it, which are superadded unto those more general, which equally respect apostasies of this kind.

CHAPTER IV.

The reasons and causes of apostasy from the truth or doctrine of the gospel, and the inclination of all sorts of persons thereunto in all ages, inquired into and declared—Uncured enmity in the minds of many against spiritual things, and the effects of it in a wicked conversation, the first cause of apostasy.

For an entrance into the ensuing discourse, I shall lay down that principle which, I presume, all men will give their assent unto, —namely, that a defection from the truth of the gospel once professed is a sin of the highest guilt, and that which will issue in the most pernicious events. God himself did frequently complain, by his prophets of old, that his people "had forsaken him," and were gone away from him,—that is, from the doctrine and institutions of his law, the only means of conjunction and communion between him and them, Deut. xxviii. 20; 1 Sam. viii. 8; 2 Chron. xxxiv. 25; Jer. v. 7, 19, xvi. 11. To convince them of their horrible folly and iniquity herein, he demands of them what iniquity they had seen in him, what inequality in his ways, what disappointments they had met withal, that they should grow weary of his laws and worship, so as to relinquish them for such things and ways as would end in

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their temporal and eternal ruin, Jer. ii. 5, Ezek. xviii. 25: for if there were nothing in them whereof they had cause to complain; if they were all holy, just, and good; if in the observance of them there was great reward; if by them God did them good and not evil all their days,—there was no apology or excuse to be made for their folly and ingratitude. That so it was with them, that their defection from the law and institutions of God was the highest folly and greatest wickedness imaginable, is by all acknowledged: yea, it will be so by them who at the same time are under a greater guilt of the same kind; for the judgments of men are ofttimes so bribed by their present interests, or corrupted by the power of depraved affections, as to justify themselves in worse evils than those which they condemn in others.

But as it was with the people of old, so it is at present with them who decline from the mysteries or renounce the doctrines of the gospel, after they have been received and professed by them, or have done so at any time: yea, their guilt hath greater aggravations than accompanied the idolatrous revolts of the Jews of old; for the gospel is a clearer revelation of God, and much more glorious, than that which was made by the law. There is therefore no reason to be taken from itself why men should desert it, either in its doctrines and precepts or the worship which it doth require. Nothing can be charged on the gospel, nothing on any thing contained in it or produced by it, which should countenance any in a defection from it. It is in itself a blessed emanation from the eternal Fountain of wisdom and truth, and hath more impressions and characters upon it of divine excellencies than the whole creation besides. Neither hath it any proper operations or effects on the souls of men but what are means and causes of deliverance from their original apostasy from God, with all the evil that ensued thereon, which is all that is evil; for the recovery of lost mankind from a state of darkness, bondage, and misery, into that of liberty, light, and peace, the present favour and future enjoyment of God, with order and mutual usefulness in this world whilst they continue therein, is the great and immediate design of the truths of the gospel. Neither is there any thing that is truly good, holy, just, benign, or useful among men, but what is influenced by them and derived from them. Some there have been, indeed, perhaps in all ages, who, pretending unto the liberty of it, have really been servants of corruption, and have turned the grace of God into lasciviousness; and some have charged the principal doctrines of it as those which give men a discharge from a necessity of holy obedience and the utmost use of their own endeavours therein. And there are those who, being given up to sensuality of life, living under the power of darkness, in the pursuit of secular

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ends, have no other thoughts of it but what the devils in the possessed man had of our Lord Jesus Christ,—that it comes to "torment them before the time." And there are not wanting some who fear no evil but from the gospel, who suppose that the minds of all men would be serene and peaceable, that all things would be quiet, flourishing, and orderly in the world, if the gospel were out of it; for whatever disturbances men make themselves, in envy, wrath, malice, persecution of others, the guilt and blame of them shall be charged on the gospel itself. And it is notoriously known how a false pretence of some grants made in, and appointments settled by, the gospel, hath been made use of to countenance some sorts of men in the crafty acquisition and violent possession of worldly power, grandeur, and wealth, venting themselves in ambition, cruelty, luxury, and pride of life. But the iniquity and folly of all these abominations, cursed artifices of the father of lies and fountain of malice, shall be, if God will, elsewhere discovered. At present I shall take it for granted that in itself it is a glorious representation of divine wisdom, goodness, grace, and love; neither doth it produce any effects but whereof God is the immediate author, and will be the everlasting rewarder. Wherefore the reasons and causes of apostasy from the part of the gospel under present consideration,—that is, the *mysteries* and *truth* of its doctrine,—must be searched for in the minds of them by whom it is forsaken, with the external furtherances that do accompany them.

It is not unnecessary such an inquiry should be engaged into; for things are in that posture and condition in the Christian world in this present age, that if it should be supposed that the lives of professed Christians do make a due representation of the gospel, that the generality of men were led and influenced into that course of life and conversation which they openly pursue by the doctrines and principles of it, it could scarce stand in competition with heathenish philosophy for usefulness unto the glory of God and the good or advantage of mankind. It is not, therefore, the gospel, but it is apostasy from it, which hath produced so many deplorable effects in the world, and which, by drenching mankind in wickedness, makes way for their misery and ruin. And this, in the vindication of the gospel, will be made in some measure to appear in the discovery of the causes and reasons of this apostasy; for let men pretend what they please, unless they have first forsaken the gospel in their hearts and minds, they would not, they could not, forsake all rules of holiness and morality also in their lives.

Again; the prevalency of this defection is so great, and the neglect of men (either intent on their private occasions, desires, and interests, or captivated under the power of it unto the approbation

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of the greatest and most dangerous evils) so visible and shameful, as that every sincere attempt to warn them of their danger, to excite them unto their duty, or direct them in its performance, whereby the progress of this product of the counsels of hell may be obstructed and themselves defeated, ought to have a candid reception of all those who have a due regard unto the interest of Christ and the gospel in the world, or the everlasting concernments of their own souls.

These are the general ends which are aimed at in the ensuing discourses; and if any one of greater abilities for this work shall be hereby provoked, or take occasion from hence, to make a more diligent inquiry into the causes and reasons of that defection from the glory and power of Christian religion which prevails in the world, and shall thereon prescribe more suitable and effectual remedies for the healing of this epidemical distemper, I shall rest abundantly satisfied in the success of this attempt and essay. And the reasons which present themselves to my thoughts are these that follow.

I. That *rooted enmity* which is in the minds of men by nature *unto spiritual things*, abiding uncured under the profession of the gospel, is the original and first spring of this apostasy. So the apostle tells us that "the carnal mind is enmity against God," Rom. viii. 7;—that is, unto the revelation of the will and mind of God in Christ, with the obedience which he requireth thereunto; for of these things doth he there discourse. The nature of this enmity, and how it operateth on the minds of men, I have elsewhere[1] declared at large, and shall not here again insist upon it. It is sufficient unto our present purpose that men, on various accounts, may take upon them the profession of the truths of the gospel whilst this enmity unto spiritual things abides uncured, yea, predominant in their minds. So was it with them of whom the apostle complains that under their profession they manifested themselves, by their wicked lives, to be "enemies of the cross of Christ," Phil. iii. 18; as those also are who, "professing that they know God, do yet in works deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and to every good work reprobate," Tit. i. 16.

Thus, upon the first preaching of the gospel, many were convinced of its truth, and took upon them its profession, merely on account of the miracles that were wrought in its confirmation, whose hearts and minds were not in the least reconciled unto the things contained in it. See John ii. 23, 24; Acts viii. 13.

Some are so far prevailed with as to acknowledge its truth, by the efficacy of its dispensation as an ordinance of God for their conviction and instruction, and yet do not part with their enmity against it.

[1] See the treatise on Indwelling Sin, vol. vi.

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Thus John was among the Jews as "a burning and a shining light," and they rejoiced for a season in his ministry, John v. 35, insomuch that the body of the people were initiated into his doctrine by the token and pledge of it in baptism, Matt. iii. 5, 6; but though all of them confessed their sins, according to his direction, very few forsook them, according to their duty.

When both these concurred, preaching and miracles, in an eminent manner, as when our Saviour preached on his feeding five thousand with five barley loaves and two small fishes, being prepared in their minds by the miracle they saw, they were so affected with his doctrine about "the bread of life that came down from heaven," that they cried out, "Lord, evermore give us this bread," John vi. 34; but, their natural enmity unto spiritual things being yet uncured, upon his procedure to instruct them in heavenly mysteries, they put in exceptions to his doctrine, verses 41, 52, 60, and immediately forsook both him and it, verse 66. And our Saviour assigns the reason of their defection to have been their unbelief, and that it was not given unto them of the Father to come unto him, verses 64, 65, or the enmity of their carnal minds was yet unremoved. Hence what they esteemed a hard and unintelligible saying, verses 52, 60, his true disciples understood to be "the words of eternal life," verse 68.

In process of time, many are prepossessed with notions of the truth of the gospel in their education, by the outward means of instruction that have been applied unto them; but yet, notwithstanding this advantage, they may still abide under the power of this depravation of their minds.

Evangelical truths being by these or the like means entertained in the minds of men, which are also variously affected with them, they will move and act towards their proper end and design. And hereof there are three parts:—

1. To take off *the soul of man* from *rest and satisfaction in itself*, as unto present peace in the condition wherein it is, and hope of future blessedness by its own endeavours; for neither of these are we capable of in our depraved, apostate state. Wherefore the first work of the gospel is to influence, guide, and direct the minds of men to renounce themselves as to these ends, and to seek after righteousness, life, peace, and blessedness, by Jesus Christ.

2. The *renovation of our minds, wills, and affections*, into the image or likeness of God, is another part of its design. And this it doth by presenting spiritual things unto us in that light and evidence, with that power and efficacy, as to transform us into their likeness, or to bring the substantial image of them upon our whole souls, 2 Cor. iii. 18; Eph. iv. 23, 24; Col. iii. 10.

3. It *engageth the whole soul*, in all its powers and faculties, through

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the whole course of its activity, or in all it doth, to live unto God in all holy obedience, Rom. xii. 1.

But when this work, or any part of it, is urged on the consciences and practice of men, they like it not in any measure. The uncured enmity whereof we speak riseth up in opposition unto them all. It begins to suppose that it hath admitted a troublesome *inmate*, that came in, as it were, to sojourn, and will now be a *judge*. Whilst the mind is exercised only about the notions of truth in speculation and reasonings, it is satisfied and pleased with them; yea, it will come unto a compliance with its guidance in sundry things and duties which it may perform, and yet abide upon its old foundations of self-sufficiency and satisfaction, Mark vi. 20. But when, in pursuit of the ends before mentioned, the gospel presseth to take men off wholly from their old foundations and principles of nature, to work them unto a universal change in powers, faculties, operations, and ends, to make them new creatures, it proves irksome unto that enmity which is predominant in them; which therefore stirreth up all the lusts of the mind and the flesh, all the deceitful policies of the old man and powers of sin, all carnal and unmortified affections, in opposition unto it. Hence spiritual truths are first neglected, then despised, and at last, on easy terms, parted withal. For men, by conviction, and on rational grounds or motives, whether *natural* or *spiritual*, may receive that as truth, and give an assent unto it, which, when it should be reduced unto practice, the will and affections will not comply withal. So it is said of some, that *οὐκ ἐδοκίμασαν τὸν Θεὸν ἔχειν ἐν ἐπιγνώσει*, Rom. i. 28,—"it liked them not," it pleased them not, they approved not of it, "to hold," retain, or keep, "God in their knowledge," or to continue in that acknowledgment of him whereof they were convinced. The inbred notions which they had by the light of nature, with their consideration of the works of creation and providence, gave them conceptions and apprehensions of the being and power of God, verses 19, 20. Hereby they are said to "know God," as they did with respect to the things mentioned; that is, the essential properties of his nature,—"his eternal power and Godhead," verse 21. This knowledge, these notions and conceptions, did immediately direct them to "glorify him as God," in holy worship and obedience, as it is expressed in the same verse; but this, through the depravation of their minds and affections, they liked not, and therefore would not retain this knowledge of him, but gave themselves up unto all abominable idolatries and brutish lusts, which were inconsistent therewithal, as the apostle at large declares. Wherefore, even as unto divine things that are conveyed unto us by natural light, and such as is unavoidable unto all mankind, the will, the affections, and the practical understanding

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are more vitiated and corrupted than are the preceptive and directive powers of the mind; and hence it was that all the world, who had nothing to conduct them but the light of nature, apostatized from its guidance, and lived in contrariety unto it. They were all rebels against that light which they had; and so will all mankind be without the especial grace of God.

It is so also with respect unto truths communicated by *supernatural revelation.* It is given as the character of those who were to carry on the great apostasy from the mysteries and worship of the gospel, that "they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved," 2 Thess. ii. 10. The truth itself, as to the profession of it, they did receive and own for a time; but such an approbation of it, such a love unto it, as should incline them unto obedience, or the improvement of it unto its proper ends, that so they might be saved, they neither had nor endeavoured after. This made them prone, on all occasions and temptations, to forego and relinquish the profession of it, to change it for the vilest errors and grossest superstitions; for in such a posture of mind, men's corruptions will prevail against their convictions. First they will stifle the truth as to its operation, and then reject it as to its profession. Let other notions be proposed unto them more suited unto the vanity of their minds or the sensuality of their affections, and they will not fail of a ready entertainment.

There are instances among all sorts of men, how, when they have imbibed persuasions and opinions, even such as are false, vain, and foolish, and have them rivetted in their minds by powerful interests or inveterate prejudices, neither the evidence of truth nor the fear of danger can prevail with them for their renunciation or relinquishment. All false ways in Christianity, and that of Mohammedanism, give us examples hereof. But we have two general instances of it that may well fill the minds of men with astonishment. The first is of the Jews, who for so many successive generations, under all manner of difficulties and calamities, continue obstinate in the most irrational unbelief and apostasy from the faith of Abraham their forefather and the expectation of all their ancestors that can enter into the heart of any man to imagine. For many generations, those who from among them have been so convinced of their folly as really and sincerely to embrace the gospel do scarce answer one unto a century of years. The other is in the church of Rome. It is known how that communion aboundeth with men otherwise wise and learned, what kings and rulers of the earth do adhere thereunto; and this they continue to do, and will do so, notwithstanding that the errors, impieties, superstitions, and idolatries of that church are so many and so manifest. Other instances there are sufficiently pregnant to

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evince that no opinions in religion can be so foolish or contemptible but that some will be found pertinaciously to adhere unto them against all endeavours for their relief, either in the way of God by rational and spiritual convictions, or in the way of the world by persecution.

It may be more may and will be found to be obstinate in error upon trials, with difficulties, dangers, and oppositions, than will on the like trials be constant in the profession of the truth,—I mean among them who together with its external profession have not received its internal power and efficacy, with the love of it in their hearts: for both sorts receive their notions and apprehensions of things in the same way, and on the same grounds of appearing reasons, though the understanding be imposed on and deceived in the one and not in the other; but error once received under the notion of truth takes firmer root in the carnal minds of men than truth doth or can whilst their minds are so carnal. And the reason of it is, because all error is some way suited unto the mind as thus depraved, and there is nothing in it that is enmity thereunto. Neither in itself nor any of its effects doth the mind dislike it, for being fallen off from the first Truth and Goodness, it wanders and delights to wander in crooked or by paths of its own; for "God made man upright, but they have sought out many inventions," Eccles. vii. 29. These it pleaseth itself withal and is conformed unto; for there is somewhat in every error to recommend itself unto the vanity, or curiosity, or pride, or superstition of the carnal mind. But it is otherwise with evangelical truths, which the mind disrelisheth because of its innate enmity unto the things which they propose and exhibit. Hence it is easier, for the most part, to draw off a thousand from the profession of it, who have no experience of its power and efficacy in their souls, than to turn one from an erroneous way, especially if he be confirmed in it by interest and prejudice. And so it is at present in the world. Every sort or party of false professors, as Papists and others, do carry off multitudes of common professors from the truth which they had owned, but seldom do we hear of any one recovered from their snares. Nor need any seducers desire a greater advantage than to have admittance unto their work where persons live in an outward profession of the truth and inward enmity unto it. They shall be filled with proselytes unto satiety.

This was the fundamental cause of that apostasy from the doctrine and truths of the gospel which has prevailed in almost the whole visible church. Had the generality of men received the truth in the love thereof, had they not had a secret enmity in their hearts and minds against it, had not things vain, curious, and superstitious been suited unto the prevailing principles of their minds and affections,

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they would not, they could not, upon any suggestions or temptations, so easily, so universally, have forsaken the gospel for the traditions of men, nor gone away from Christ to follow after Antichrist, as we know them to have done. But when an external profession of the truth became to be transmitted from one generation to another, the spirit and power of it being wholly neglected, men did but wait for opportunities gradually to part with it, and give it up for any thing else that was suggested unto them, many in the meantime setting their wits on work to find out inventions suited to their lusts and corrupt affections. That it was thus with them who were carried away with the great apostasy, that they did by all outward ways and means, in their lives and conversations, manifest that so it was with them, shall be afterward declared; and had it not been so with them, the event complained of had not ensued.

And herein lies the present danger of the persons, churches, and nations, which at this day make profession of the gospel: for if a pressing trial or vigorous temptation, if a coincidence of various ways and means of seduction, do befall them who have received the truth, but not in the love and power of it, they will be hardly preserved from a general apostasy; for when any attempts shall be made from without upon them, they have treachery from the deceitfulness of their own hearts at the same time working in them, for their uncured enmity against the truth doth but watch for an opportunity to part with it and reject it. Any thing that will but free them from the efficacy of those convictions or power of the traditions under which they are held captive unto the profession of the truth, as it were whether they will or no, shall be cheerfully embraced and complied withal. And the danger hereof doth sufficiently evidence itself in that open dislike of the rule and conduct of the truth which most men testify in the whole course of their lives.

It is plain, therefore, that unless this enmity be conquered or cast out of the mind; unless the mind be freed from its corrupt agency and effects; unless the truth obtain its real power and efficacy upon the soul; unless it be so learned "as it is in Jesus," whereby men "put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and are renewed in the spirit of their minds, putting on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness;" unless they love and value it for the effects of spiritual peace, power, and liberty, which it produceth in them,—there will be found among them little constancy or perseverance in their profession when temptations shall concur with opportunities for a revolt: for who can give security that what hath formerly fallen out amongst the generality of mankind shall not in any place do so again, where the same causes of it do again concur?

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Having discovered this *first cause of defection* from the gospel, we may easily discern what are the only true effectual ways and means of the preservation and continuance of the true religion in any place or among any people where it hath been professed, especially if temptations unto a revolt should abound, and the season be made perilous by advantageous opportunities. Love of the truth, and experience of its power in the hearts of men, will produce this effect, and nothing else [will.] All other means, where these have been wanting, have failed in all places in the world, and will do so again when a time of trial shall come. True religion may be established by law, countenanced by authority, have a prescription of a long profession, or be on other accounts so fixed on the minds of men as that multitudes shall promise the firmest stability in the profession thereof; but there is no security in things of this nature, and we shall quickly see all the hopes that are built upon them vanish into nothing. Convictions or traditions, unto whose power a secret enmity is retained, may make a bluster and noise for a season, but every breath of temptation will carry them away before it. Were it not so with the most of men, had it been possible that so many nations in less than an age should fall into Arianism, after the truth had been so long known and professed among them; or that the body of this nation after a blessed reformation should again relapse into Popery, as in the days of Queen Mary, when many who had professed the gospel cast others into flames who continued so to do?

It is greatly complained of that Popery doth increase in this nation; and some express their fears of its farther prevalency, and that perhaps not without cause. And although there are several other ways whereby men may and do apostatize from the truth, yet all those who take any other measure of things besides their own secular interests, with the corrupt affections of their minds; in wrath, envy, and revenge, do look on this as far the most dangerous, as that which will be most compliant with the predominant lusts of the present age, and most comprehensive to receive the community of men. Besides, by what it hath done formerly, it sufficiently instructs what it is likely enough to do again. Wherefore very many industriously attempt its prevention, as that which would prove (if it should prevail) deplorably ruinous unto the nation and their posterity therein. To this end some implore the aid of authority for the enacting of *severe laws* for the prohibition of it. This, according to the opinion of late ages, some suppose the most effectual means for the preservation of the truth; for if they can but destroy all that are otherwise minded, the rest of mankind will have the face of peace unto them who are advantaged thereby. Some write *books* in the confutation of the errors of it, and that to very good purpose.

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But in the meantime, if there be any thing of truth in reports, the work is as effectually progressive as if no opposition had been made unto it; and we may assure ourselves that these and such like means as these, if they are alone, will never keep Popery out of England, if it should ever have an advantage and opportunity for a return, nor prevent the entrance of any other false way in religion.

As for the use and severity of penal laws, I meddle not with it, as that which is to be referred to the wisdom of our governors. But I must needs say, it seems not to be unto the advantage of truth, or, at least, not unto the reputation of them by whom it is professed, that they should no otherwise be able to preserve its station amongst men. Neither can it be honourable unto any religion, that where it pretends unto all the advantages and rights of truth, and [is] in the real possession of all outward emoluments and supportments, yet that it cannot secure itself or maintain its profession without outward force and violence, things so remote from the first introduction and planting of truth in the world. But these things are not of our present consideration. [As] for the confutation of the errors, superstitions, and idolatrous practices of the church of Rome, in books of controversy, it is no doubt a work good, useful, and necessary in its kind; but when all is done, these things reach but a few, nor will many divert from other occasions to the serious consideration of them. Wherefore some other way must be fixed on and engaged in to secure the truth and interest of protestant religion among us; and this is no other but the effectual communication of the knowledge of it unto the minds, and the implantation of the power of it on the hearts of the people. This is that alone which will root out of them that enmity unto evangelical mysteries and spiritual things which betrays the souls of men into apostasy.

Unless men know what they are to value religion for, and what benefit they really receive by its profession, it is irrational to expect that they will be constant therein when a trial shall befall them. If once they come to say, "It is in vain thus to serve God," or, "What profit is it that we have kept his ordinances?" they will easily admit the yoke of any falsehood or superstition that pretends to gratify them with greater advantages. And at one time or other it will be no otherwise with them with whom this enmity is predominant.

But, on the other side, when God by the gospel "shines in the hearts of men, to give them the light of the knowledge of his glory in the face of Jesus Christ;" when they find their consciences set free thereby from the intolerable yokes of superstition and tradition; and that by the word of truth which they do profess they are begotten anew unto the hope of eternal life, their inward man being renewed and their lives reformed thereby; that their expectation of a blessed

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immortality is well founded on it and safely resolved into it,—they will, through the effectual supplies of the Spirit of Christ, abide constant in the profession of it, whatever may befall them.

On these terms, on these experienced evidences of truth and goodness, was the gospel first entertained among men, and the reformation of religion first introduced into this nation; for although sundry other things concurred unto its reception and establishment, yet if the minds of multitudes had not received an experience of its power and efficacy unto the ends mentioned, it would never have been of any permanency among us. The mere outward form of true religion is not able to contend with that *appearance* which error and superstition will represent unto the minds of men, as knowing how much they stand in need thereof.

These things I know are by some despised. They suppose they have surer ways and better expedients for the preservation of the profession of the gospel amongst us than its own power and efficacy. What those ways are we need not conjecture, seeing themselves declare them continually; but they shall not be here spoken unto. But it is to be feared that they may be filled with the fruit of their own imaginations when those things shall fail them wherein they have placed their confidence. Wherefore, if there be a neglect about these things in the ministry and others whose duty it is to promote them, the issue will be sad, it may be beyond what is feared: for if the body of the people be suffered to live without any evidence of an acquaintance with the power of that truth which they do profess, or any demonstrative fruits of it in a holy conversation, we may cry out, "Popery, Popery," as long as we please; but when temptations, opportunities, and interests do concur, their profession will fall from them as dry leaves from a tree when they are moved with the wind. The apostle tells us that those who "went out from them were not of them, for if they had been of them they would have continued with them," 1 John ii. 19. They were among them by the profession of the truth, or they could not have gone out from them;—but they were "not of them" in the participation of the power of the truth, and "communion thereby with the Father and the Son;" for if they had, "they would have continued with them,"—that is, steadfast in their profession.

This is that which ought to be fixed on the minds of all persons concerned, of all that are zealous for the truth of the protestant religion, or are obliged, what lies in them, to provide for its preservation. When things are come unto the appointed season, when they are issuing in that period which they have a natural tendency unto, all other expedients and devices will be of none effect. A diligent communication unto the body of the people, through the dispensa-

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tion of the word, or preaching of it, of the power of the truth they profess in all its blessed effects,—whereon they will have an experience and witness within themselves of the reasons why they ought to abide constantly in its profession,—will alone secure the continuance of the gospel in succeeding generations. All other means will be ineffectual unto that end; and so far as without this they are or may be effectual, it will be of no advantage unto the souls of men.

That there is a danger at all times of a defection among professed Christians from the truth hath been before evinced. That this danger at present hath many especial circumstances rendering it dangerous in a peculiar manner is in like manner acknowledged by all such as call these things into serious consideration. And it will not, I presume, be denied but that every man, according as he is called and warranted by especial duty, is obliged to his utmost endeavours for the prevention of a revolt from the truth. The whole inquiry is, What is the best way, means, or expedient, to be plied unto this end? And this, I say, is only by the diligent ministerial dispensation of the word, with such an exemplary zeal and holiness in them by whom it is dispensed, and all other things requisite unto the discharge of that work, as may reconcile the hearts of the people unto evangelical truths, beget in them a delight in obedience, and implant the power of the word in their whole souls. Want hereof was that which lost the gospel in former ages, and will do so wheresoever it is, in this or those which are to come. And I shall not, in my own thoughts, blamably digress from my present subject, if I confirm this opinion with some few obvious considerations; for,—

1. It is the way, the *only way*, which God hath *ordained*, and which he *blesseth* to this end and purpose. None will pretend, as I suppose, that God hath appointed any other way to bring men unto the profession of the truth but by the preaching and dispensation of the word alone. When they are wrought upon or convinced thereby, so as to give up themselves unto the profession of it, it will be hard to find an ordinance of God of another kind for their preservation therein. When the apostle took his last farewell of them who were converted by his ministry at Ephesus, he "commended them to the word of God's grace, which," as he judged, "was able to build them up, and to give them an inheritance among all them which are sanctified," Acts xx. 32.

A man would think it were a more difficult work to convert men from Judaism or Paganism, or any false religion, unto the profession of the gospel, than to retain them in that profession when they are initiated thereinto: for in that first work there are all sorts of prejudices and difficulties to be conflicted withal, and not the least advantage from any acknowledged principles of truth; but as to the

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preservation of men in the profession of truth which they have received and owned, the work on many accounts seems to be more expedite and easy. If, therefore, the dispensation of the word, as it is God's ordinance unto that end, hath been a sufficient and effectual means for the *former*, what reason can be assigned that it should not be so for the *latter* also, without farther force or violence?

It will be said that the first preachers of the gospel were furnished with *extraordinary gifts*, whereby their ministry was rendered *effectual* unto the first conversion of the nations; but whereas now those gifts do cease, the efficacy of the ministry doth so also, and therefore stands in need of such *outward* assistance as the former did not. I say, for my part, I wish it all the assistance which those unto whom it is committed can desire, so that no force be offered to the consciences or persons of other men. But why shall we not think that the *ordinary gifts* of the ministry are as sufficient for the *ordinary work* of it as the *extraordinary* were for that which was *extraordinary?* To speak the truth, the difference lieth in persons in the discharge of their duty, and not in the things, gifts, or duties themselves. Were all those who are called, or profess themselves to be called, unto the preservation of the truth of the gospel in the work of the ministry, as conscientiously diligent in the discharge of their duty, as well fitted, according to the rules of the gospel, with those ordinary spiritual gifts which are necessary unto their work and calling, did as fully represent the design and nature of their message unto men in a holy conversation, as those first appointed unto the conversion of the nations were and did, according to their larger measures of grace and gifts, the work would have a proportionate success in their hands unto what it had in the beginning. But whilst those unto whom this charge is committed do neglect the use of this means, which is the ordinance of God unto this purpose, that the truths of the gospel be preserved amongst men; whilst either they judge that the principal end of their office is to capacitate them for secular advantages, and to give them outward rest therein, with the enjoyment of those things which unto the most in this world seem desirable; and therewithal think meet to betake themselves unto other expedients for the preservation of the truth, which God hath not appointed nor sanctified to that end,—it is no wonder if faith and truth fail from amongst men.

The apostle Paul foresaw that a time would come wherein some men would "not endure sound doctrine, but after their own lusts would heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears," who should "turn them away from the truth, and turn them unto fables," 2 Tim. iv. 3, 4; and we may see what course he prescribeth for

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the prevention of this evil, that it might not proceed unto a general apostasy. It must also be observed that the advice he gives in this case, though originally directed unto one individual person, who was immediately concerned, yet it lies in charge on all that are or shall be called unto the rule of or ministry in the church. This course he proposeth, verses 1, 2, 5, of that chapter: "I charge thee before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine. Watch in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry." This is that course and way which he prescribeth for the preservation of the truth against the corruptions of men's minds and the craft of seducers; and the charge of this duty he giveth with so great a solemnity, and urgeth with so many motives emphatically expressed, as manifest of how great moment he conceived it to be.

Perhaps this way of the preservation of the truth and the salvation of the souls of men, by continual labouring in the word and doctrine, with an undergoing of all those difficulties which attend it, is not esteemed so advisable as formerly; for what good would men's lives or preferments do unto them if they should be obliged thus to labour in this sweaty kind of preaching? But if it be so, they must at one time or another be contented to part with the truth and all the advantages they have by the profession of it; for let men turn themselves which way they please, let them traverse their methods and multiply their counsels, to secure religion according to their apprehension, however they may hereby chain their idols, as the heathens did their gods of old to prevent their departure from them, and fix a profession of lies, the truth of the gospel, as unto any useful end of it, will be no otherwise preserved in a nation, church, or people, but by this means of God's appointment.

2. This is such a way and expedient for the preservation of the truth and the profession of the gospel as none can have the impudence to complain of or except against. There is in all places, among all sorts of persons, a pretence of zeal for the retaining of what they conceive to be the truth or right in religion. But the ways which, for the most part, they have chosen unto that purpose have been full of scandal unto Christian religion; so far from being rational means of preserving men in it as that they are effectual to deter them from it. Such is that outward force which hath been now tried in this nation, as elsewhere by all sorts of persons; and wise men may easily observe what it is arrived unto. In the meantime, it is openly evident that, let the end aimed at be never so good, the means used for the attaining of it are accompanied with much evil. What peace or

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satisfaction they have in themselves who are the prosecutors of this way I know not. It is above my understanding to apprehend that the minds of any Christians can be thoroughly at ease, rejoicing in God through Jesus Christ, whilst they cause others to be terrified, pursued, ruined, and destroyed, merely for that which is their faith and hope in Christ Jesus. But I know not the principles of the minds of other men, the make or constitution of their consciences, nor the rules of their walking before God, much less their prevailing prejudices and interests, that influence them beyond all evidence of reason to the contrary; and therefore they may have a satisfactory peace in this way, though I understand not how. On the other side, those who are practised upon and forced to suffer in this course of proceeding are filled with alienation from them and their profession by whom they suffer. Hence it is known what mutual animosities, hatreds, contentions, severe reflections, and dreadful scandals, this way is attended withal. We see at this day what clamours and contests are raised about it, what pleas are managed against such procedures, how uncouth it is unto human nature to suffer all extremities for that which men are fully persuaded they deserve well in of mankind; nor can any man give assurance but that, at one time or other, the wheat shall be plucked up instead of tares.

But as to the way now proposed, of preserving the truth by the diligent, effectual dispensation of the word of the gospel unto the generality of the people, who can pretend a provocation by it or take offence at it? No mortal man will be prejudiced by it in any thing that he dares own a concernment in. The devil, indeed, will be enraged at it, not only as that which is designed unto the ruin of his interest and kingdom in the issue, but as that wherein he hath no share, nor can interpose his endeavours; for he is a spirit as *restless* and *active* as he is *malicious*, and loves not to be excluded out of any business that is on foot in the world. Wherefore, although he equally hates the truth in the management of all men, yet in the way of preserving of it before mentioned he can and doth so apparently immix himself and his effectual workings that he is very well satisfied with it; for what he may possibly lose on the one hand in point of truth, he gains ten times more on the other in the loss of love, peace, holiness, with all the fruits of goodness, meekness, and benignity, which ought to be among men. And let him have but his hand effectually in the promotion of this loss, and have the contrary fruits to feed upon, he is little concerned with the profession of truth in this or that way of worship amongst men. Be it, therefore, that he is or will be enraged at this way of preserving the truth, we know that the kingdom of Christ will be no otherwise maintained in the world but by a conquest of his rage; and for those who manage the

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same design with him, their wrath and envy, which they dare not manifest, will but torment and consume themselves.

3. Setting aside some few instances of violence and blood, consuming the persons of men, as among the Waldenses, Bohemians, and some others, which yet were never totally prevalent, and revolutions of government attended with the like cruelties, as in the days of Queen Mary in England, which was but of short continuance, no instance can be given of the defection of any church or nation from the truth but where there was a neglect of implanting the power of the gospel on the minds and hearts of men by those unto whom that charge was committed. This sinful neglect was that which constantly opened the door unto all apostasy. Wherefore on this foundation the weight of all useful profession of the gospel among us doth depend. And if God will be pleased to put it into the hearts of all them who are concerned in this duty to labour effectually therein, and to give unto the people an example of the power of the gospel in their own holy, humble, useful, fruitful conversation among them, and shall be pleased, moreover, to furnish them with the gifts of his Spirit, enabling them unto a successful discharge of their duty, evangelical truth would certainly receive an unconquerable establishment among us. And it may be it is not suited unto the exigence of this season that any of those who are called and enabled unto this work, being willing to engage their utmost in defence of the truth, especially in this way of its preservation, by leavening the minds of men with a sense of its power and worth, should be prohibited the discharge of their duty. But the purposes of God in all things must stand, and himself be humbly adored, where "his judgments are unsearchable, and his ways past finding out."

Again: this innate and yet uncured enmity unto things spiritual and heavenly becomes a cause and means of apostasy from the truths of the gospel, by filling the hearts of men with a love of sin, and their lives with the fruits of it in wicked works; for men are "alienated and enemies in their mind," in or "by wicked works," Col. i. 21. The enmity which is in their minds doth operate and manifest itself in wicked works. And the alienation wherewith this enmity is accompanied is from the "life of God:" Eph. iv. 18, "Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God;" that is, from the spiritual, heavenly life of faith and holiness, which God requireth, and whereof he is the end and object. Of this life the truths of the gospel are the spring, rule, and measure. See Acts v. 20; Eph. iv. 20, 21. Wherefore, when men are "alienated from the life of God," and through the love of sin are given up unto wicked works, they cannot but secretly dislike and hate that truth, that spiritual and heavenly doctrine, which is the spring and rule of holiness, and

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whereby both the love of sin and the fruits of it in wicked works are everlastingly condemned. Let, then, men pretend and profess what they please, whilst this enmity is in them as a predominant principle of sin and wicked conversation, they are practically and really enemies unto the gospel itself; and where any persons are so, it is easily imaginable how ready and prone they will be to part with it on any occasion, for none will retain that in their minds which is useless to them, and troublesome unto their principal inclinations, any longer than they have a fair opportunity to part with it. That this frame of mind is an effectual obstruction unto the due receiving of the gospel, our Saviour expressly declares: John iii. 19, 20, "This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved." Wherever the power of sin abideth, and men are engaged in the practice of it, so as that their deeds are evil, they will not receive the light of the gospel,—that is, in its own nature and power, and for its proper ends; and when they are, by conviction or any other means, wrought unto a compliance with it, yet they do it but partially and hypocritically, nor can do it otherwise whilst their deeds are evil. So was it with them who are said to believe in Christ. Being some way convinced of the truth of his doctrine, yet would they not confess him, because "they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God," John xii. 42, 43. By the reigning power of this one sin of ambitious hypocrisy most of them were kept off from any assent unto the gospel; as our Saviour speaks unto them, "How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only?" John v. 44. With the residue, who were not able wholly to withstand their convictions, it prevailed so far as that they should not receive it sincerely, but partially and hypocritically. Now, that which so effectually keeps the most from giving any admission at all unto the gospel, and which suffers none to receive it in a due manner, will easily prevail, where it abides in its power, unto a total relinquishment of it when occasion is offered.

Seeing, therefore, that all those whose deeds are evil, who through the enmity that is in their minds do give up themselves in their lives unto wicked works, are really alienated from the truths of the gospel, they are and will be ready at all times for a defection from them; for being kept under the dominion of sin, they have no real benefit by them, but rather find them inconsistent with their principal interests and chiefest joys.

Hence is that description which the apostle giveth of those who were evangelically converted unto God: Rom. vi. 17, 18, "God be

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thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness." There is no obedience from the heart unto the gospel, no possibility of being cast into the mould of the doctrine delivered in it, unless we be made free from the service of sin.

We may therefore, without scruple, fix [on] this as one principal means and cause of that apostasy from the truth of the gospel which hath been in the world, and which is yet deplorably progressive. Men who love sin and live in sin, whose works are wicked and whose deeds are evil, are all of them in their hearts alienated from the spiritual, holy doctrines of the gospel, and will undoubtedly, on any occasion of temptation or trial, fall away from the profession of them.

What reason have we to hope or judge that drunkards, swearers, unclean persons, covetous, proud, ambitious, boasters, vain, sensualists, and the like enemies of the cross of Christ, should adhere unto the truth with any constancy if a trial should befall them? "Look diligently," saith the apostle, "lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright," Heb. xii. 15, 16. Esau's birthright was his right unto and interest in the promise of the gospel made unto Abraham. This he, being a profane person, when he was pressed with a little hunger, parted withal for one morsel of meat. And if others, saith the apostle, are like him, profane persons, fornicators, or such as live in any course of sin, if a temptation befall them, and their lusts call to be satisfied, they will for morsels of bread, for the smallest earthly advantages, part with their interest in and profession of the gospel. So he tells us of them who, having put away a good conscience, did make shipwreck of the faith, 1 Tim. i. 19. After men have debauched their consciences by living in sin, they may for a while speed on their voyage with full sails of profession; but if a storm come, if a trial befall them, if they meet with a rock or shelf in their way, they quickly make shipwreck of the faith, and lose that, whatever else they labour to preserve.

What should secure such persons unto any constancy in profession? for whilst they are in this condition, it is altogether indifferent unto them, as to their present or future advantage, what religion they are of, or whether they are of any at all or no. It is true, one way of religion may more harden them in sin, lay more prejudices against and hinderances of their conversion, than another; but no religion can do them good or yield them the least eternal advantage whilst they abide in that condition. It will be all one at the last day what religion wicked and ungodly sinners have been of, unless it be that the

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profession of the truth will prove an aggravation of their sins, Rom. ii. 11, 12.

Besides, when a temptation unto the relinquishment of the truth doth befall them, it hath nothing but a few traditional prejudices to contend withal. When they are taken off from them, and begin to search themselves for reasons why they should adhere unto the truth which they have outwardly professed, they quickly find in their own hearts a predominant dislike and hatred of that light and truth which they are solicited to part withal; for every man, as our Saviour testifieth, hateth the light whose deeds are evil.

This is that which abroad in the world hath lost the gospel so many princes, nobles, and great men, who for a while made profession of it. This is that which is of such dismal abode at this day as to the danger of a general apostasy. All sorts of persons do give up themselves unto the service of sin. The complaint of the prophet is not unsuited to our occasion, Isa. i. 4–6. Many are openly flagitious, beyond precedent or example among the heathen. Worldliness, pride, ambition, vanity, in all its variety of occasions and objects, with sensuality of life, have even overrun the world. And that which is of the most dreadful consideration is, that the sins of many are accompanied with the highest aggravation of all provocations,—namely, that they proclaim them like Sodom, and hide them not, but glory in their shame. In all these things men do really, though not in words, proclaim that they are weary of the gospel, and are ready to leave it; some for any pretence of religion, some for none at all.

And this is the most dangerous posture that any place, church, or people can be found in; for whereas men are of themselves ready and prone unto a spiritual revolt and defection, when this ariseth from and is promoted by the love of sin and a life therein, God is ready also penally to give them up unto such delusions as shall turn them off from the gospel. So the apostle expresseth it, 2 Thess. ii. 10–12, "They received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness." Where men, under the profession of the truth, will continue profligate in sin, and take pleasure in unrighteousness, God will not always suffer the gospel to be prostituted to give them countenance in their wickedness, but will judicially give them up unto such delusions as shall flood them away into an open apostasy from it.

This was the great cause of that general and almost catholic apostasy that was in the world before the reformation. The body of the Christian people, by such means and on such occasions as shall

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be afterward declared, were grown worldly, sensual, wicked, and obstinate in sin. The complaints hereof are left on record in the writings of many in those days. And in vain it was for any to attempt to reduce them unto a conformity unto the gospel, especially considering that the most of their guides were no less infected than themselves. Chrysostom was almost the only person, at least he was the most eminent, who set himself in his ministry to stem, if it were possible, the rising tide of impiety and wickedness among all sorts of persons; but instead of any success, his holy endeavours ended in his own banishment and death. All degrees and orders of men undertook the patronage of public sinning against him, and to his ruin. Wherefore there remained but two ways of dealing with the generality of men in such a condition. The one was, according to the advice of the apostle, to "turn away" or withdraw from them, 2 Tim. iii. 5, so leaving them out of the communion of the church; the other was, to accommodate religion unto their temper and lusts, whereby a face and appearance of Christianity might be preserved among them. And the generality of their leaders preferring their interest before their duty, the latter way was chosen and gradually promoted.

Hence were opinions and practices invented, advanced, and taken into religion, that might accommodate men in their lusts, or give countenance and pretended relief unto them who were resolved to live in their sins. Such were auricular confession, penances, absolutions, commutations of all sorts, missatical sacrifices for the living and the dead, the church's treasury of merit and power of pardon, suffrage and help of saints, especially purgatory, with all its appendages.

Hereby was the apostasy completed; for men being grown carnal and wicked, there appeared no way to keep them up unto the profession of the gospel but by corrupting the whole doctrine and worship of it, that their lusts might be some way accommodated. To this end *external* things were substituted in the room of things *internal*, having the same names given unto them; ecclesiastical things in the room of things spiritual; outward offices, orders, and multiplied sacraments, with their efficacy by virtue of the work wrought, in the place of real conversion unto God, purity of heart, with strict universal holiness; disciplines and corporeal severities in the room of evangelical repentance and mortification;—nor could the lusts of men have possibly a higher accommodation, whilst any pretence of religion was necessary to be preserved. So formerly did wickedness of life lead the way unto apostasy from the truth. And the whole of the papal apostasy may be reduced unto these two heads:—First, An accommodation of the doctrine and worship of the gospel

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unto the carnal minds and lusts of men, with the state of their consciences that ensued thereon; and, secondly, The accommodation of the lusts, ignorance, and superstition of men unto the interests and worldly advantage of the pope and his clergy.

And herein lieth the danger of this age. The great design of the generality of men is, *to live in sin* with as little trouble at present, and as little fear of what is future, as they can arrive unto. And there are but two ways whereby such a posture of mind may be attempted.

The one is by obliterating all notions of good and evil, all sense of future rewards and punishments, or of God's government in the world. This some in all ages have endeavoured: for "the fool hath said in his heart, There is no God;" and thereon are "they corrupt, and do abominable works," Ps. xiv. 1. And no age could ever give more instances of this affected atheism than that wherein we live. Neither do any deceive themselves into it, but merely with this design, to live in sin without control from themselves; which is the last restraint they can acquit themselves of. And some of them do please themselves with the attainment of them in the psalmist: "The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God: God is not in all his thoughts," Ps. x. 4. But God hath inlaid the minds of men, antecedently unto all actings of their wills and affections, with such a tenacious and unanswerable witness to the contrary, that it is very difficult for any to bring themselves unto any tolerable satisfaction this way: for "that which may be known of God is manifest in themselves," whether they will or no, Rom. i. 19; neither can they free themselves from prevailing apprehensions that it is "the judgment of God, that they who commit sin are worthy of death," verse 32. Wherefore we have not many instances of men who pretend a senselessness of these things out of principle, or that find no disquietment on the account of sin. And by the most of them this is but pretended. Their *outward boasting* is but a sorry plaster for their *inward fears* and vexations; nor will the pretended security of such impious persons endure the shock of the least of those surprisals, calamities, and dangers, which human nature is obnoxious unto in this life, much less of death itself. The end therefore mentioned, be it never so earnestly desired, is not this way to be attained.

Another way, therefore, must be found out unto the same end, and this must be by *a religion*. Nothing but religion can convert men from sin, and nothing but religion can secure them therein. To this purpose is that of our apostle: "In the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful,

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unholy, without natural affection, truce-breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof," 2 Tim. iii. 1–5. Had they the power of religion in them, they could not give themselves up unto the pursuit of such brutish lusts; and had they not some form or other of it, they could not be secure in their practice: for,—

Sin and *conscience* are stubborn in their conflict whilst immediately opposed, conscience pleading that there should be no sin, and sin contending that there may be no conscience; but, as nature is corrupted, they will both comply with an accommodation. Wherefore a device to satisfy sin and to deceive conscience will not fail of a ready entertainment; and this is the design in part or in whole of every false way in religion that men apostatize unto from the purity and simplicity of the gospel. See 2 Pet. ii. 18, 19. One way or other is proposed to take men off from the necessity of regeneration and the renovation of their nature into the image of God, in the first place; for this is that lion in the way which deters all sorts of sluggards from attempting any thing seriously in religion. And whereas our Lord Jesus Christ hath placed the necessity of it at the first entrance into the kingdom of God, there is no false way of religion but its first design is to destroy its nature or take away its necessity. Hence some would have it to be only *baptism*, with the grace it confers by the work wrought; some substitute a moral reformation of life in the room of it, which, as they suppose, is sufficiently severe; and the light within makes all thoughts of it useless;—for if this point be not well secured, all ensuing attempts to accommodate men with a religion will be in vain; it will still be returning on them, that "except they be born again, they cannot enter into the kingdom of God." Internal sanctification of the whole person, the mortification of all the motions of sin that are in the flesh, with that universal obedience which is required unto the life of God, must also be provided for or against, and yet conscience be satisfied therewithal. Wherefore, if you can obtain that persons who live in sin, and are resolved so to do, not troubling themselves about these things, shall suppose that they may be secured eternally in such a way of religion as you propose unto them,—that what is wanting in themselves shall be done for them by absolutions and masses, and various supplies out of the church's treasury, with the great reserve of purgatory when things come to the worst,—there is no great fear (especially if some other circumstances fall in also to promote the design) but that you will find them very ductile and pliable unto your desires. Add hereunto, that the ways whereby

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any may be interested in these efficacious means of eternal salvation, —namely, by confession, penances, and alms,—are possible, yea, easy to persons who never intend to leave their sins. Of this sort are the most of those visibly who every day fall off to the Roman church. And it were to be desired that the wickedness of men did not give grounds of fearing additions to their number; for if there be no assurance of the constancy of men in the profession of the truth, unless their souls and lives are transformed into the image of it (as there is not), certainly those ways wherein men are furiously engaged in the pursuit of their lusts must needs be perilous, and may, without the especial help of divine grace, bring forth a fatal defection.

CHAPTER V.

Darkness and ignorance another cause of apostasy.

II. THE second spring or cause of defection from the gospel in any kind, is that *spiritual darkness* and ignorance which abides in the minds of men under the profession of the truth.

The gospel may fall under a double consideration: First, Of the things themselves that are contained, revealed, and proposed therein;—these are the material objects of our faith. Secondly, With respect unto the doctrinal way of their declaration. With respect unto the first, there is a spiritual darkness on the minds of all men by nature, so as that they cannot discern them in their own native form and beauty. With respect unto the latter, men are said to be ignorant, namely, when they do not in a due manner understand and comprehend the doctrines of the gospel, and so perish for want of knowledge. These things being of a distinct consideration, and of different influence into this pernicious event, the first shall be first spoken unto.

1. That there is such a *spiritual darkness* on the minds of men by nature, and wherein their depravation by sin doth principally consist, is fully testified in the Scripture, as I have at large elsewhere evinced.[1] Hence all men grant, so far as I know, that there is need of spiritual illumination to enable us to discern spiritual things in a due manner, though all are not agreed in the nature and causes of that illumination. But to deny the thing itself is to deny the gospel, and to make the promises of God of none effect. Now, where illumination is needful, there darkness is to be removed; for the end of the bringing in of light is to dispel darkness. Wherefore, such a depravation of the minds of men in spiritual darkness must

[1] See the previous volume of his works, page 244.—ED.

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be acknowledged, or the gift and grace of God in illumination must be rejected; and they by whom it is done do by their own blindness give new evidence unto the truth which they do oppose, there being no more certain demonstration of the power of darkness in any than for them to affirm that they stand in no need of light to be communicated unto them by the effectual operation of the Spirit of God. As to the nature of this illumination I shall not here dispute, but take it at present for granted that it is an act of His power who of old "commanded light to shine out of darkness, shining in our hearts, to give us the knowledge of his glory in the face of Jesus Christ," 2 Cor. iv. 6.

There is *a glory and beauty* in those spiritual things which are the subjects of the truths of the gospel. There is in them the wisdom of God, "the wisdom of God in a mystery," 1 Cor. ii. 6, 7, yea, "the manifold wisdom of God," Eph. iii. 10; the glory of the Lord, which is represented unto believers in the glass of the gospel, 2 Cor. iii. 18, or "the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ," chap. iv. 6; —things expressly beyond discovery by the use of any means whatever merely natural, 1 Cor. ii. 9, 10. Even the philosophers of old contended that there was a beauty in all truth, which would engage the minds and affections of men unto it were they able to discern it; and if they saw and granted this in things natural and moral, which are earthly and exposed unto the common reason of mankind, how much more must it be granted of the truth of things heavenly, spiritual, and divine! See John iii. 12. In brief, whatever there is of divine glory or excellency in the divine nature itself, in any or all of its holy properties, in the great and most glorious effect of them in the person and grace of Christ, in the renovation of our nature into the image of God, in the divine life of faith and obedience, it is proposed unto us in the truths of the gospel.

2. Whatever *doctrinal proposition* may be made of these things unto the minds of men, yet the things themselves cannot be comprehended nor spiritually discerned without the *illumination* of the Holy Ghost before mentioned. Hence it follows that men may be instructed in the doctrines of truth, yet, continuing under the power of natural darkness, not discern the things themselves in their own spiritual nature and glory, nor have any experience of their power and efficacy. This all the prayers of holy men in the Scripture for spiritual light and instruction, all the promises of God savingly to enlighten the minds of men, and the descriptions given of that work of his grace whereby he doth effect it, do undeniably evince. One consideration will be sufficient unto our purpose. Whosoever hath a spiritual view and knowledge of these things, his mind will be, and is, certainly changed and transformed into the image of them. So

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the apostle tells us expressly, 2 Cor. iii. 18, "We all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image." They are cast into the same mould with the doctrine whereunto they are given up, Rom. vi. 17. The mind is united unto the things so discerned, and the image of them is so brought forth therein as that there is an exact conformity between them. But we see by open and palpable experience, that notwithstanding the knowledge which many have of spiritual things, their minds continue carnal and fleshly, filled with corrupt and depraved affections, and are no way changed into the image or likeness of the things themselves. There needs no farther demonstration that men have never had a spiritual view of or insight into the glory of gospel truths, be their doctrinal knowledge of them what it will, than this, that their minds are not renewed thereby, nor transformed into the likeness of them.

Where it is thus with men, they have no *stable grounds* whereon to abide in the profession of the truth against *temptation, opposition, or seduction;* for their steadfastness must be an effect of such an assurance in their minds of the truth of the things which they do believe, as will be prevalent against all that force and artifice wherewith they may be assaulted, and such as will not suffer their own minds to be indifferent, careless, or negligent about them. But whence should this arise? Assurance from outward natural sense in spiritual things we are not capable of, nor are they evidenced unto our minds by rational demonstration. All the full persuasion or assurance we can have of them, which will be prevalent against temptations and oppositions, ariseth from such a spiritual view of them as gives an experience of their reality, power, and efficacy upon our minds: and this respects both the renovation of the mind itself in light and faith; the adhesion of the will unto the things known and believed, with a holy, heavenly, unconquerable love; and the constant approbation of the good, acceptable, and perfect will of God in all things. Hence this assurance, though it be neither that of sense nor that of reason, yet in the Scripture is compared with them and preferred above them, as that which giveth the mind a more certain satisfaction than they can do, although it be of another kind. And without this it is impossible that men should attain any such evidence or full persuasion of that evangelical truth which they may profess, as to secure them in their profession in such a juncture of circumstances and occasions as they may fall into.

Here, therefore, I place another means and cause of apostasy from the truth of the gospel after it hath been received and professed. Multitudes in all ages have been instructed in the truth, some have been learned and knowing in the doctrines of it; but whereas, by

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reason of their darkness, as being destitute of spiritual illumination, they did not discern the things themselves which they assented unto, in their supernatural, heavenly nature and glory, and therefore had no experience of their proper power and efficacy on their own minds, affections, and lives, they could not have any such evidence of their truth as would upon trials confirm their adherence unto them or secure them from apostasy.

Had the minds of men been transformed in their renovation to "prove what is the good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God,"—had they by beholding of spiritual things "been changed into the same image from glory to glory, by the Spirit of the Lord,"—they would not have abandoned the most important doctrines of the gospel, as we know them to have done, nor have embraced foolish imaginations in their stead, on every plausible courtship and address unto their fancies. How came men under the papal apostasy gradually to desert the principal truths of the gospel and all the spiritual glory of its worship? Not discerning the internal glory and beauty of things evangelical and purely divine, not having an experience of the power of them in and upon their own minds, they chose to comply with, and give admission unto, such things whose outward painted beauty they could discern, and whose effects on their natural and carnal affections they had experience of.

We have seen, in all ages, men learned and skilled in the doctrines of the truth, so as that they might have been looked on as pillars of it, yet to have been as forward as any unto apostasy from it when they have been tried; yea, such have been the leaders of others thereinto. So many of this sort fell into Arianism and Pelagianism of old, as some have done into Socinianism, and many into Popery in our days. When such fall away, usually they overthrow the faith of some, and shake the confidence of others.

But the apostle gives a double relief against this temptation:—first, The *stability of God's purpose* in the preservation of the elect; and, secondly, The *means of preservation in holiness* of them that believe, 2 Tim. ii. 19. And we may be assured concerning them all, that they never had that intuition into nor comprehension of spiritual things which alone could secure their stability. They never saw so much or that in them for which they should be preferred above all other things. No man who forsakes the truth ever saw the glory of it, or had experience of its power. "They went out from us, but they were not of us," saith the apostle of such persons; "for if they had been of us" (whose fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ), "they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us," 1 John ii. 19.

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Thus when the apostle had described the woful apostasy of some among the Hebrews, he adds concerning them whose preservation he believed, "But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation," Heb. vi. 9. Whatever knowledge men may have of the doctrines of the gospel, and whatever profession they may make, unless they have withal those things which are inseparable from salvation, such as is the saving illumination of the Holy Ghost, whereby the darkness of our minds is removed, there can be no assurance that they will always "quit themselves like men," and "stand fast in the faith." And this consideration doth not a little evidence the danger of a defection from the truth which attends the days wherein we live.

For, first, it is from hence that we have such a numerous generation of *sceptics* in religion among us,—a sort of men who pretend not to renounce or forsake the truth, only they will talk and dispute about it with the greatest indifferency as to what is true or false. The Scripture, the holy Trinity, the person of Christ, his offices, the nature of justification and grace, whether it be or be not, this or that church, all or any in the world, as to their profession and worship, are weighed in the defiled, tottering scales of bold, irreverent discourses. For some reasons known to themselves, this sort of persons will own the public profession of religion, perhaps be teachers in it. But on all occasions they fully manifest that they are utterly ignorant of the fundamental difference between truth and error, and so give no firm assent unto what they do profess; for this difference lieth in their glory and beauty in themselves, and in their power and efficacy towards us. Spiritual, heavenly truth, by its relation unto the being, infinite wisdom, goodness, love, and grace of God, by the characters of all these things impressed on it and represented by it, is glorious, amiable, and desirable;—all error, as an effect of darkness, and by its relation unto Satan as the head of the apostasy which drew off our minds from the original essential Truth, is distorted, deformed, and brings the mind into confusion. Truth is powerful and effectual to conform the soul unto God, and to principle it with a love of and power unto obedience;—error turns the mind aside into crooked and by paths of folly or superstition, or pride and self-advancement. Were men practically acquainted with this difference between truth and error, it would take away that indifferency in their minds unto them which this sceptical humour doth discover. Truth so known in its nature and efficacy will beget that reverence, that love, that sacred esteem of itself, in the souls of men, as they shall not dare to prostitute it to be bandied up and down with every foolish imagination. And from this sort of men, who are commonly the most bold and forward in undertaking the conduct of others, by

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a pretended generous contempt of their narrow principles, groundless scruples, and pusillanimous fears, nothing is to be expected but a wise and safe compliance with any ways or means of apostasy from the truth which shall be advantageously presented unto them.

And by the means of this darkness, it is easy to conceive how uncertain and unstable the minds of the generality of men, who perhaps also are somewhat ignorant (whereof we shall treat afterward), must needs be in their assent unto the truth and the profession of it. They are no way able to discover it in such a way or manner as to give them an assurance which will be infallibly victorious against temptations and oppositions; nor can they have that holy love unto it which will secure their minds and affections from being enticed and ravished from it. But, all the difference between truth and error which they can discern lying in bare different notions and apprehensions, wherein also they are dark and unskilled, it is no wonder if at any time they make an easy transcursion from the one to the other. So did the body of the people lose the truth gradually under the papal defection without any great complaint, yea, with much complacency and satisfaction; and it is to be feared that multitudes are ready at once to steer the same course if occasion be offered unto them.

From this consideration we may rectify the seeming solecism that is in the profession of religion, or the professors of it. Truth in every kind is the only guide of the mind in all its actings; wherein it proceeds not according unto it, it is always out of the way. Divine truth is the sole conduct of the mind in all its actings towards God; it is the only fountain, immediate cause, and rule of all our obedience. But yet, whereas in other things men generally walk in the light of those sparks of truth which they have received, we see that many by whom divine truth is owned and professed in its greatest purity and highest discovery are ofttimes no less wicked and vicious in their lives, no less enemies unto holiness, no less barren and unfruitful in those good and useful works it guides and directs unto, than those who, having the greatest aversation from it, are, under the conduct of other principles, erroneous and superstitious. Thus the lives of the common sort of Protestants are no better than those of the Papists, nor are theirs to be compared with those of some of the Mohammedans; yea, by the power of false and superstitious apprehensions imposed on their minds and consciences, some are carried out unto greater and more frequent acts of bounty and charity, of the mortification of the flesh, the denial of its sensual appetites and satisfactions, than are to be found among the most who profess themselves to be under the conduct and rule of truth. Hence no profession of religion, be it never so corrupt or foolish, is advanced amongst

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us, but instantly (at least for a season, and while it is new) it pretends an advantage as unto life and conversation against the truth, measured by the lives of its common professors; yea, this is made the principal motive and argument to prevail with honest and well-meaning people unto a compliance with the profession of their way, because of the effects which (as it is pretended) it produceth in their lives and conversations above those which profess the truth. And how prevalent this pretence hath been among us is known unto all.

Wherefore, I say, we cannot allow that the lives of the common sort of professors should be esteemed a just and due representation of the doctrine which they do profess. It is true, that where it is not so men will have no benefit by their profession, nor will they be steadfast in it when a trial shall befall them. Where the mind is internally and really conformed unto the truth, there the actions of the life may be allowed to represent sincerely, though not perfectly, the truths which are believed; and he is no firm Christian in any kind, he is brought into no spiritual order, whose mind doth not receive by the Spirit of Christ the transforming influence of evangelical truth, and who exerts not the power of it in a holy conversation, so as that he is not unwilling that what he believeth may be impartially judged by what he liveth, as to sincerity, though not as to perfection. But if we should allow the lives of men in general to be a rule whereby judgment might be safely passed in these things, it cannot be denied but that sometimes, and in some ages and places, error would, at least for a season, carry it in glory and reputation from the truth, yea, the light of nature from grace, tradition from the Scripture, and the Alcoran from the Gospel.

But we have sufficient ground of exceptions unto this interpretation and exposition of the doctrine of our Lord Jesus Christ, and that without the least apology for the ungodly lives of its professors. Among these, that now insisted on is of the first rank and evidence. Multitudes of those who profess the truth never had a view of its spiritual glory because of the darkness of their minds, and therefore have no experience of its power and efficacy, nor are their hearts and lives influenced or guided by it; for the gospel will not have its effects on the minds of men unless it first communicates unto them those internal spiritual principles which are necessary unto all the operations that it doth require. Put this new wine into old bottles and all is lost, both bottles and wine also. The doctrine of the gospel, taken notionally into the old, unrenewed, corrupt minds of men, is utterly lost as unto all the proper ends of it. And wherever there is a reformation of life, with any diligent attendance unto duties moral or religious, wrought in persons by the light and dispensation of the gospel, they are the immediate effects of those doctrines

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which it hath in common with the light of nature and the law in its power, and not of those which are peculiarly its own. And this they seem to understand well enough who, finding, either in their own experience, or from the observation they have made of others, how ineffectual the truth of gospel mysteries is towards the minds of carnal men, have upon the matter abandoned the preaching of it, and have taken up only with those principles which are suited unto the light of nature and convictions of the law.

The holiness which the gospel requireth is the transforming of our whole souls into the image and likeness of God, with the actings of renewed nature in a universal approbation of his "good, and acceptable, and perfect will," Rom. xii. 2. But this will not be effected unless we can "behold the glory of the Lord" in it, whereby alone we may be "changed into the same image from glory to glory," 2 Cor. iii. 18. Nor can we so behold that glory unless he "who commanded the light to shine out of darkness do shine in our hearts to give us the knowledge of it," chap. iv. 6. Hence is the doctrine of it ineffectual in the hearts and upon the lives of many by whom its truth is openly professed.

It is otherwise with every *false religion*. The motives which they make use of, and the instruments they apply, unto the hearts of men, to effect the reformation of their lives, and to engage them unto such works and duties as they require, are all of them suited either unto their natural light, or unto their superstitions, fears, desires, pride, and other depraved affections. Those of the first sort,—namely, such as are suited unto natural light,—are common, in some degree or measure, unto all religion whatever, be it on other accounts true or false. Every thing that is called religion pretends at least unto the improvement of natural light, as did the philosophers among the heathen of old. It urgeth also the law so far as it is made known unto them, though by other presumptions and prejudices some do abate and take off from its force and efficacy, making void the commandments of God through their own traditions. Whatever change is wrought or effected on the minds and lives of men by virtue of these principles, and motives taken from them, doth not belong unto any one way in religion more than another; nor is it to be accounted unto the glory or advantage of any of them. In these things Mohammedanism and all false ways in Christianity have an equal share and interest, unless where, by some corrupt opinions of their own, men deprave the light of nature and the rule of the law itself.

Some finding, as they say, more of justice, temperance, veracity, righteousness in dealings, with common usefulness unto mankind, among Turks and Banians,[1] than among the common sort of Chris-

[1] Idolaters in India, who believed in the transmigration of souls.—Ed.

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tians, do foolishly begin to think that their religion is better than Christianity. But as this scandal will be surely required at the hands of them who give it by their flagitious lives, so it is foolishly and wickedly taken by others; for those truths and laws which produce these effects in them are common unto all religions, and are equally suited unto the light and reason of all mankind, and have more evidence and efficacy communicated unto them by the gospel than by any other kind of religion whatever. And so it is with them among ourselves who would plead an advantage unto their profession by the effects of it in their lives as to a moral conversation, when they can pretend unto no real motive thereunto,—namely, unto what is good and useful, and not mere affectation and hypocrisy,—but what is owned and pressed in the doctrine of the gospel which we adhere unto. The differences, therefore, that are in this kind are not from the doctrines men profess, but they arise from the persons themselves who embrace them, with their various lusts, inclinations, and temptations.

It is evident, therefore, that whatever there is of moral good, duty, or usefulness among men in any *false way of religion*, it all proceeds from those principles and is the effect of those motives which are owned and improved in that which is *true;* and it may be easily evinced that they are more cultivated and cleared, have more evidence, life, light, and power given them, by the truths of the gospel, than by any other means or way whatever. And where they have not an equal effect upon those who profess that truth which they have on some by whom it is deserted, it is from the power of their own cursed lusts and carnal security. The difference on the part of religion itself consists in what is superadded unto these general principles by any notions of it. Now this, in every false religion, is what is suited unto the natural principles of men's minds, their innate pride, vanity, curiosity, superstition, irregular hopes and fears. Such among the Romanists are the doctrines of merit, of outward disciplines, of satisfactions for sin, of confession, penances, of purgatory, and the like. They were all of them found out to put some awe on the minds, and to have some influence on the lives of men, who had lost all sense of the principles and motives of gospel obedience, though some considerable respect was had unto the benefit and advantage of them by whom they were invented; for why should men labour and beat their brains merely for others, without some income and revenue of advantage unto themselves? And it is no wonder if they produce in many, as they have done, great appearing acts of devotion, many outward works of bounty and charity, yea, in some, real austerities of life and renunciations of the pleasures of the world. I doubt not but that the sensual, wicked paradise of Mohammed doth

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effectually prevail in the minds of many of his followers unto that kind of virtuous and devout life which they suppose may bring them unto its enjoyment.

The inquiry, then, on the whole matter is, wherefore the truths of the gospel do not produce, in all by whom they are professed, effects as much more excellent than those mentioned as truth is more excellent than error, heavenly light than superstition, faith than frightful apprehensions of feigned torments, true peace and tranquillity of mind than outward reputation and glory. And the principal reason hereof is, because such persons as are barren in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ do not discern those truths in their spiritual nature, nor can therefore take in the power and efficacy of them on their souls.

There is a holiness, obedience, and fruitfulness in good works, wrought, preserved, and maintained by the truth of the gospel, in them who are truly regenerated and sanctified thereby, who receive the proper efficacy of it on their minds and souls, which differ in the whole kind and nature from any thing which the principles and motives before mentioned, which have their efficacy from their suitableness unto the depraved affections of men's minds, can produce; and this alone is acceptable with God. But it must be granted, that where men are ignorant of the power and unacquainted with the internal efficacy of the gospel, their lives under the profession of the truth may be as bad, and it is a great wonder they are not worse than those of the Papists, of the most erroneous persons, or even of the Mohammedans themselves: for they have many superstitious imaginations and false principles that are suited to put some outward restraint upon their lusts, and to press them unto actions praiseworthy in themselves; but these being no way influenced by such apprehensions, and being not under the power of gospel truth, it is a wonder, I say, if they exceed them not in all manner of wicked conversation. It is not merely the outward profession of the truth, but the inward power of it, that is useful either unto the world or the souls of men.

And hence it is that the preaching of any person which principally dwelleth on and argueth from the things which the light of nature can of itself reach unto, and the convictions which are by the law, is better accepted with, and appears more useful unto, multitudes of common professors, than the declaration of the mysteries of the gospel is: for such things are suited unto the natural conceptions of men and the working of their own reason, which gives them a sense of what efficacy they have; but being in the dark unto the mysteries of the gospel, they neither see their excellency nor experience their power. Nevertheless, they and they only are the true spring, cause,

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and rule of all acceptable obedience, even "the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth." From the whole it appears how prone such persons must be unto an apostasy from the truth who have no spiritual light to discern its glory nor to let in the power of it upon their souls.

If, then, we would be established in the truth, if we would stand fast in the faith, if we would be preserved from the danger of that defection from the gospel which the world is prone, disposed, and inclined unto, it must be our principal endeavour to have a spiritual acquaintance with the things themselves that are declared in the doctrine of truth which we do profess, and to have an experience of their efficacy upon our own souls. Mere notions of truth, or the knowledge of the doctrines of it, enabling us to talk of them or dispute for them, will not preserve us. And although this spiritual light be the grace, promise, and gift of God, yet is it that which we are to endeavour after in a way of duty; and the directions ensuing may contribute somewhat towards the right discharge of our duty herein:—

1. *Pray earnestly for the Spirit of truth to lead us into all truth.* For this end is he promised by our Saviour unto his disciples; and there are no teachings like his. If we learn and receive the truths of the gospel merely in the power and ability of our natural faculties, as we do other things, we shall not abide constant unto them in spiritual trials. What we learn of ourselves in spiritual things, we receive only in the outward form of it; what we are taught by the Spirit of God, we receive in its power. The apostle grants that "the spirit of man," his mind, reason, and understanding, is able to conceive of and apprehend "the things of a man," things merely natural, civil, or moral, which are cognate unto human nature; but saith he, "The things of God," the mystery of his wisdom, love, and grace in Christ Jesus, "knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God," and by him are they revealed unto them that do believe, 1 Cor. ii. 9–12. Without his especial aid, men may, by their natural sagacity and industry, attain an acquaintance with the doctrines of truth, so as to handle them (like the schoolmen) with incredible subtilty and curiosity; but they may be far enough for all that from an establishing knowledge of spiritual things. That horrible neglect which is among Christians of this one duty of earnest prayer for the teaching of the Spirit of Christ, that scorn which is cast upon it by some, and that self-confidence in opposition unto it which prevails in the most, sufficiently manifest of what nature is their knowledge of the truth, and what is like to become of it when a trial shall befall them. The least spark of saving knowledge inlaid in the minds of the poorest believers, by the gracious operation of the Holy Ghost, will be more

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effectual unto their own sanctification, and more prevalent against oppositions, than the highest notions or most subtile reasonings that men have attained in leaning unto their own understanding. Wherefore the Scripture abounds in examples, instances, and directions for prayer, unto this end, that we may have the assistance of the Holy Spirit in learning of the truth of the mysteries of the gospel, without which we cannot do so in a due manner: Eph. i. 16–20, "Making mention of you in my prayers; that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places." Chap. iii. 14–19, "For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God." Col. ii. 1–3, "I would that ye knew what great conflict I have for you, and for them at Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh; that their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ; in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge."

2. Rest not in *any notions of truth*, unless you find that you have learned it as it is in Jesus. What it is to learn the truth as it is in Jesus, the apostle fully declares, Eph. iv. 20–24, "But ye have not so learned Christ; if so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus: that ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." This it is to learn the truth as it is in Jesus,—namely, together with the knowledge of it, to have an experience of its power and efficacy in the mortification of sin, in the renovation of our nature, and transforming of the whole soul into the image of God in righteousness and the holiness of truth. When

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men learn that they may know, and are satisfied with what they know, without an endeavour to find the life and power of what they know in their own hearts, their knowledge is of little use, and their assent unto the truth will have no stability accompanying of it. The immediate end (with respect unto us) of the whole revelation of the mind and will of God in the Scripture is, that it may put forth a *spiritual, practical power* in our souls, and that we may do the things which are so revealed unto us. Where this is neglected, where men content themselves with a bare speculation of spiritual truths, they do what lies in them to frustrate the end, and "reject the counsel of God" in them. If, therefore, we would know any evangelical truths in a due manner, if we would have that evidence and assurance of them in our minds which may secure our profession against temptations and oppositions, let us not rest in any apprehensions of truth whose efficacy we have no experience of in our hearts, nor think that we know any more of the mysteries of the gospel than we find effectually working in the renovation of our minds, and the transforming of our souls into the image of the glory of God in Christ.

3. Learn to esteem more of a *little knowledge* which discovers itself in its *effects* to be *sanctifying* and *saving*, than of the highest attainments in notions and speculations, though gilded and set off by the reputation of skill, subtilty, eloquence, wit, and learning, which do not evidence themselves by alike operations. We are fallen into days wherein men of all sorts, sects, and parties, are vying for the reputation of skill, ability, knowledge, subtilty, and cunning in disputes about religion. And few there are who are cast under such disadvantages by apparent want of learning, but that they hope to make it up one way or other, so as to think as well of their own knowledge and abilities as of other men's. He who hath learned to be meek, humble, lowly, patient, self-denying, holy, zealous, peaceable, to purify his heart, and to be useful in his life, is indeed the person who is best acquainted with evangelical truth. Wherefore, let this knowledge be esteemed, both in ourselves and others, above all that proud, presumptuous, notional, puffing knowledge, which sets up for so great a reputation in the world, and we shall have experience of a blessed success in our pursuit of it.

4. Be not satisfied without a *discovery* of such a goodness, excellency, and beauty in *spiritual things*, as may attract your hearts unto them, and cause you to cleave unto them with unconquerable love and delight. This is that necessary, inseparable adjunct, property, fruit, or effect of faith, without which it is not essentially differenced from the faith of devils. That knowledge, that perception and understanding of the truth, which doth not present the things

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known, believed, perceived, as lovely, excellent, and desirable unto the will and affections, is a "cloud without water," which every wind of temptation will scatter and blow away. Do not, therefore, suppose that you have learned any thing of God in Christ, of the mystery of his grace, of his acceptable and perfect will, unless you see therein such evidence of infinite wisdom, goodness, holiness, love, in all things so suited unto the eternal glory of God and advantage of your own souls, in the uttermost rest, peace, and satisfaction that they are capable of, as that you may admire, adore, delight in them, and cleave unto them with a holy, prevalent, unconquerable love. When you do so, then will you be established in the truth, and be able to bid defiance unto the artifices of Satan, with the solicitations of men, that would withdraw or separate you from it. But I will not farther digress in these discourses.

Ignorance is another occasion of apostasy from the truth, which was named under this head of the depravation of the minds of men. It is the want of a due perception, understanding, or knowledge of the principal doctrines of the gospel, with the evidence which is given unto them, and the use of them in the Scriptures, that we intend hereby. A general knowledge of some doctrines, without an acquaintance with their grounds and reasons, their use and effects in the life of God, is of no value in these things. When persons know not in religion *what they ought to know, as they ought to know it*, or what it is their duty to know, and without the knowledge whereof they can perform no other duty of religion in a right manner, then are they culpably ignorant, and so as to be exposed unto all other evils that may befall them; for whether this be for want of due instruction from others, or want of diligence in themselves to learn, the event is equally pernicious. In the first way, the Holy Ghost assures us that "where there is no vision, the people perish," Prov. xxix. 18. The people will suffer where those whose duty it is so to do are not able to instruct them; for "if the blind lead the blind, both must fall into the ditch." And in general it is affirmed, that the "people are destroyed for lack of knowledge," Hos. iv. 6. Of such ruinous consequence, by one means or other, is the people's ignorance of what it is their duty to know; and by no one way doth it so effectually operate unto their destruction as by this of disposing them to a defection from the truth which they have professed when any trial or temptation doth befall them.

Multitudes, yea, whole nations, are often brought unto an outward general profession of the truth of religion, especially with respect unto the opposition of any other that is made thereunto. The influence and example of some that are in power and esteem among them, falling in with a season of encouraging circumstances, may

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produce this effect, where men have little knowledge of what they profess, and less sense of its power and efficacy. So the body of the people of old turned unto the profession of the true religion under the reformation made by Josiah; nevertheless, as the prophet observes, "they did it not with their whole hearts, but feignedly," Jer. iii. 10. They did it not out of love to the truth, or a cordial respect unto the ways of God, but in a hypocritical compliance with their ruler. The conversion of the northern nations after they had possessed the western parts of the Roman empire was a pledge of what their future profession was like to prove. The first conversion of the world was by the laborious preaching of apostles, evangelists, and others, accompanied with many miraculous operations, exemplified in holiness of life, and patience under all sorts of persecutions; and by this means none were received or admitted into the profession of Christian religion but such as were personally convinced of its truth, instructed in its mysteries, conformed in their lives to its precepts, and engaged unto its profession against persecution. But in these latter conversions, some kings, rulers, or potentates, being dealt withal by popes or other princes, and thereon (perhaps with no small influence from secular considerations) admitting of the Christian religion in opposition unto Paganism, their allies, kindred, and subjects, usually followed them therein; having indeed little more of Christianity than the administration of some external rites, and a relinquishment of their old idols for the new saints proposed unto them. By this means their first profession of Christianity was laid in profound ignorance of the principles and most important doctrines and duties of the gospel. Hence it became most easy for them who were looked on as their guides to lead them into all those foolish opinions, idolatrous practices, superstitious devotions, and blind subjection to themselves, whence at length issued the fatal apostasy. Knowing but little of what they ought to have known, and delighting not in obedience unto what they did know, they willingly embraced themselves, and God judicially gave them up unto, those strong delusions which turned them wholly from the gospel.

Thus the generality of this nation hath received and professed the protestant religion in opposition unto Popery; and no doubt many did so through a sincere and effectual conviction of its truth, upon the first reformation. But it is so come to pass, that what through their own supine negligence and carelessness about all things invisible and eternal, what through the sloth, ignorance, laziness, and wretched indifferency in religion, of some of those that should instruct them, multitudes are become shamefully ignorant of the rudiments and principles of that religion which they account themselves

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to profess. So hath it been almost in all ages and places after profession became national. Many will not make use of the means of instruction which they have, and more want that means in an effectual measure. Nor, it may be, can there be an instance given where there hath been sufficient care taken, or at least sufficient provision made, for the instruction of the body of the people in all parts of it; neither is that ordinary course of the ministry which is passant in the world sufficient to this purpose. Can any man who knows any thing of the gospel, or of the nature of men with respect unto spiritual things, once suppose that the reading of prayers unto a people, or the rehearsing of a sermon without zeal, life, power, or evidence of compassion for the souls of men, accompanied with a light, vain, worldly conversation (as it is with many), should answer the apostolical pattern of laying the foundation, and then carrying on of men by continual instruction unto perfection? From hence (as also from other reasons obvious unto all impartial observers) it is that "darkness covers the earth, and gross darkness the people," ignorance prevailing on all sorts of men. Some will not learn, some have none to teach them, some are engaged in the pursuit of sensual lusts and vanities, some swallowed up in the love of and cares about the things of the world; few in any age have been conscientiously diligent in the things which are of eternal concernment unto them.

This was that which facilitated the papal apostasy, from whence it took its rise, and by which it received its progress. Those who would on the motives mentioned be accounted Christians, and which it was the interest of the pretended presidents in religion to have so esteemed, being profoundly ignorant, they first accommodated the practices of religion unto their carnal, superstitious minds, and then gradually led them into all errors and fables; for they were blind, and knew not whither they went. So were the important truths of the gospel abandoned for monkish dreams, for legends of foolish, lying miracles, and other heathenish superstitions. It was by ignorance, I say, principally, that the people gave themselves up unto the power of seducers; which enabled the architects of the Roman apostasy to carry them into opinions, ways, and practices, suited unto their secular interest: and so sensible have they been of their advantage hereby, as that some of them have commended ignorance, as the most useful qualification of the people in religion!

We may therefore well fix this as another cause, or occasion at least, of apostasy. When men are ignorant of the religion which themselves profess, as to its doctrines, and the principal grounds of them; when they are like the Samaritans, who understood not their own religious worship, which they had received by tradition, but "worshipped they knew not what," John iv. 22,—they are no way able

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to defend themselves against the least impressions of seducers. They may plod on in the old track of some formal outward duties, but if any one meet them in their way, it is easy for him to turn them out of it. So the apostle, showing the danger that professors were in because of apostatical seducers, assigns the means of their preservation to be "the unction which they had received, whereby they knew all things," 1 John ii. 19, 20, 27. Had they not been taught and instructed in the truth, they could not, at such a season, have persevered in the profession of the faith. Yea, such persons are very ready to think that there is something worthy their consideration in what is proposed unto them by the most corrupt seducers, whereas they have really found nothing in what themselves have so long professed; for no man can find any real benefit, profit, or advantage, in that whereof he is ignorant. So it is said that some by "good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple," Rom. xvi. 18. Every thing they say hath a plausible pretence and appearance unto persons under that character, so as that they are apt to be taken and pleased with it. Hence is that advice of the apostle unto them who design establishment in faith and order: "Brethren, be not children in understanding; howbeit in malice be ye children, but in understanding be men," 1 Cor. xiv. 20. Τέλειοι γίνεσθε ταῖς φρεσί,—"Be ye complete, perfect," well instructed in your minds, fully initiated into the doctrines of the gospel. Such the apostle calls τελείους, "perfect men," 1 Cor. ii. 6; Heb. v. 14. Those who, in opposition hereunto, are "children,"—that is, weak and ignorant,—will also be uncertain and unstable. They will be as children, "tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive," Eph. iv. 14.

For let some crafty papal emissaries come among this sort of people, and let them confidently tell them that they neither have, nor ever will have, any benefit by the religion they profess, and that they have no evidence or assurance of the truth of it;—they tell them no more but what they will know to be true if once they take it into consideration; for whereas they have seemed to be "always learning," by resorting to church, and the like outward means whereby religion is expressed, yet they "never came to the knowledge of the truth." Wherefore, when by any means they are put unto a stand, and are forced to consider themselves, they are amazed to find how little it is that they believe of the religion which they profess, or know of the ground of what they would be thought to believe.

Let such persons add (as they will not fail to do) that with them of Rome is full assurance, that none ever mistook the way who accompanied them that are of the old religion, which their forefathers

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professed so many ages before this new-fangledness came up, which hath filled all things with confusion, disorder, sects, and divisions, whereas before all were of one mind (which was the most plausible argument of Paganism against Christianity), every troublesome personal circumstance of their present condition makes them inclinable to believe that it may be as they say. Let them tell them, moreover, of the power granted unto the priesthood of their church to pardon all sorts of sins; of the effectual intercession of saints and angels, among whom they may choose out particular patrons and guardians for themselves; of the mercy, grace, goodness, power, and interest in heaven of the blessed Virgin, all continually exercised in the behalf of Catholics; of the miracles that are daily wrought among them; of the wondrous sanctity and devotion which some among them have attained;—they begin to think that there is somewhat in these things which they can feel or see, whereas in their own religion they can understand little or nothing at all. The "great things" of the gospel are "strange things" unto them; they neither do nor can understand them by all the diligence they think meet to use in this case. But the things now proposed unto them have the nature of tales, which the mind of man is accustomed unto, and apt both to receive and retain. And it is not imaginable how easy a transition will prove from a religion whereof men know little or nothing at all, unto that which at one view presents unto their fancies and senses all that they need believe or do that they may be eternally happy.

Suppose one of another sort to come among such persons, and at once call them off from the profession of that religion which they pretend unto, confidently requiring them to attend wholly unto *a light within them*, which will be their guide and direct them unto God;—they find by *natural experience* that there is some such light within them as that which he seems to propose unto them; for there is so in all men, as the apostle declares, even the light of conscience, accusing or excusing as unto sin or duty, Rom. ii. 14, 15. Having, therefore, by reason of their ignorance, no experience of any power or efficacy in that religion which themselves profess, they begin to think there is a reality in what is proposed unto them, and so are easily inveigled; for there is no security of his constancy for one moment, when a trial or temptation shall befall him, who hath not light or knowledge enough of the truth to give him some inward experience of the efficacy of what he doth profess.

But it is no way necessary to insist any longer on that which is so evident, both in matter of fact and in the reasons of it. An apostasy from *a traditional profession* of those truths which indeed men understand not, is easy, and in a time of temptation unavoidable.

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In all ages, multitudes have thus perished for want of knowledge; for such persons are destitute of defence against any external cause or means of defection. They have nothing in their minds to oppose to force, nothing unto seductions or fraud, nothing to the examples of great leaders, nothing to conflict with the superstition of their own minds; and will therefore, when wind and tide suit the design, comply with any fair pretence for a revolt.

And herein lieth no small part of the danger of the public profession of the protestant religion among us. By whose defect principally God knows, but it is incredible how stupidly ignorant multitudes are. Such there are who know no difference in religion, whilst the same names of God and Christ are commonly used, and the same places frequented for worship. Yet will this sort of men show great zeal and earnestness against Popery and other heresies! None more forward to revile, contemn, and prosecute them to their power; as ready as Mohammedans are to persecute Christians, or Papists sincere believers, and that on the same grounds. But if at any time they are put unto a stand, and necessitated to give an account unto themselves of the reason of their own religion, what it is they believe, and why they do so, their confidence will fail them, and, like unto men fallen into cross-paths and ways, they will not know what to do. And on such occasions they are the readiest of all men, in a kind of shame of themselves, to give up the religion which they have professed for any other, wherein it is promised they shall have more skill, and by which they may have some benefit, as it is pretended, whereas by their own they have had none at all.

Whatever, therefore, is amongst us or elsewhere an occasion of ignorance among the people, it doth expose them unto a fatal defection from the truth. If those upon whom it is incumbent to instruct them in the knowledge of the truths and mysteries of the gospel are unskilful or negligent in the discharge of their duty, they do what lieth in them to give them up bound hand and foot to the power of their spiritual adversaries; and they will be found chargeable with no less guilt who lay obstructions in the way of others who would willingly labour in the instruction of them unto their power. A man would think, from all circumstances, and all indications of the present inclinations of the minds of men, that it were the chief interest of all that really love the protestant religion to preserve its professors from apostasy or any disposition thereunto. That this will be done effectually without a continual instruction of them in the truths which are to be professed, with their grounds, reasons, and effects, is so fond an imagination as that it deserves no consideration. It is but to build castles in the air, to suppose that men will be kept constant in the profession of religion by outward laws, the observance of exter-

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nal forms, and the secular advantage of some persons by it, wherein they are not concerned. They will not be so, I say, when a trial shall befall them. There is no other means that is appointed of God, or is rational in itself, for the attaining of this end, but that those who are so concerned do what in them lies personally to instruct the people in the truth, encouraging them unto obedience by their own example; and to prevail with them who have the same design to be assisting with them therein. But to cry out of the great danger of protestant religion in the growth of Popery, and at the same time not only to be negligent themselves in the great duty of communicating the real effectual knowledge of it unto the souls of men, but also to lay needless obstructions in the way of others who would sincerely endeavour so to do, is an unaccountable solecism in religion. Either we are not in earnest in our pretended zeal for the truth and our fears of the prevalency of Popery, or we believe not that instruction in the truth is the only means to preserve men in the useful profession of it; which is to renounce the gospel and all rational consideration therewithal, or we are influenced by other things, which we far more esteem than evangelical truth and the purity of religion.

The reformation of the church consisted principally in the deliverance of the people from darkness and ignorance; and if through our neglect they should be reduced again into the same state and condition, they would be a ready prey for the Papacy to seize upon. The advice of the apostle, as to the duty of all gospel ministers and officers in such a season as we are fallen into, is that alone which will preserve us, 2 Tim. iv. 1–5.

But it may be supposed that so much labour and diligence in the instruction and teaching of the people, as some assert, is altogether unnecessary. It is enough if they be taught what are the general principles of religion, and do thereon comply with the conduct of the church whereunto they do belong. Besides, if this burden be incumbent on the ministry, that those called thereunto are to have no relaxation from constant, sedulous "labouring in the word and doctrine," and are moreover required to exemplify what they teach in the whole course of their conversation, who would ever take upon him that office that can advantage himself in the world any other way? It must needs prove very burdensome if we have a religion that will not be preserved in the minds of men without all this constant, endless toil and labour. In the Roman church we see how easy a thing it is to keep up the people unto its profession, whilst the clergy are at liberty to pursue and use the pleasures and honours of this world, nor are any of them obliged unto those irksome and endless pains which we seem to require; yea, they find by experi-

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ence that ignorance in the people is the best expedient to keep them in subjection to the priests, and then all things are secure. I wish that such thoughts as these do not influence the minds of some unto a readiness for a change, if so be it might be effected without hazard. But if more pains, diligence, labour, with perseverance therein, be required by us in the ministers of the gospel and guides of the church, than the Holy Ghost in the Scripture doth plainly, positively, frequently enjoin, let it be rejected and despised. Alas! the best of us, of all that are alive, do come short in many things of the rules and examples that are proposed unto us therein, nor do I know on what grounds or by what measures the most of us do intend to give in our accounts at the last day. Nor is there any more impious opinion, nor more contradictory to the gospel, than that it is enough for the people, to be instructed only in the general principles of religion, without any farther improvement or growth in knowledge; for those who are thus called "The people" are, I suppose, esteemed Christians,—that is, disciples of Jesus Christ, and members of his mystical body; and if they are so, their growth in understanding, their edification in knowledge, their being carried on unto perfection, their acquaintance with the whole counsel of God, with the mysteries of his love and grace in Christ Jesus, are as necessary for them as the "saving of their souls," indispensably depending thereon, can render them. And if we will be ministers of the gospel, it will not be best for us to prescribe unto ourselves our rules and measures of duty. It will be our wisdom to accept of that office on the terms limited by the Holy Ghost, or utterly to let it alone. And we must know, that the more exactly our profession is suited unto the gospel, the less mixture there is in it of any thing human, the more difficult it is thoroughly to instruct men in the knowledge of it. The mind of man is far more apt and able to comprehend and retain fables, errors, and superstitions, than evangelical truths. The former are natural unto it; against the latter it hath a dislike and enmity, until they are removed by grace. Hence, some will make a more appearing proficiency in a false religion in four or five days than others will do in the knowledge of the truth almost in so many years. We may have well-grown Papists in a month's time, that shall be expert in the mysteries of their devotion; and there is another profession that two or three days will bring men unto a perfection in: but slow is the progress of most in learning the truth and mysteries of the gospel. If peculiar diligence and constant sedulity be not used in their instruction, they will be made a prey unto the next opportunity for a defection from the truth.

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CHAPTER VI.

Pride and vanity of mind, sloth and negligence, love of the world, causes of apostasy—The work of Satan, and judgments of God in this matter.

III. The innate *pride and vanity of the minds of men* is another means whereby they are disposed and inclined unto an apostasy from the profession of evangelical truth. With respect hereunto the design and work of the gospel is, to "cast down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God," taught therein, "bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ," 2 Cor. x. 4, 5. The mind of man is naturally lifted up with high thoughts in itself and of itself. That it is sufficient unto all the ends of its being, all the duties of its condition, without any special aid or assistance from above, is the prevailing principle whereby it is acted. Men do not only by nature say, "With our tongue will we prevail; our lips are our own: who is lord over us?" Ps. xii. 4,—"We have a sovereignty over all our outward actions;" but also, that nothing is, or can, or ought to be required of us, but what we have power in ourselves to comprehend, comply withal, and perform. This in all ages of the church, under various forms and pretences, hath been contended for. The true state of all controversies about the powers of nature and grace is this, That, on the one hand, the minds and wills of men are asserted to be self-sufficient as to internal abilities unto all duties of obedience necessary unto eternal blessedness; on the other, that we have no sufficiency of ourselves, but that all our sufficiency is of God. See 2 Cor. iii. 5, ix. 8. This principle, which sprung immediately out of that pride whereby, aiming at an enlargement of our self-sufficiency, we utterly lost what we had, was never yet rooted out of the minds of the generality of professed Christians.

In all things the mind of man would be its own measure, guide, and rule, continually teeming with these two evils:—

1. It exalts *imaginations* of its own, which it loves, applauds, dotes on, and adheres unto. This is the original of heresy, this hath given birth, growth, and progress, to error; for "God hath made man upright, but they have sought out many inventions," Eccles. vii. 29. Seeking out and exalting inventions of our own, in things spiritual and religious, is the principal and most pernicious consequent of our fall from that state of uprightness wherein of God we were created.

2. It makes *itself* the sole and *absolute judge* of what is divinely proposed unto it, whether it be true or false, good or evil, to be received or rejected, without desire or expectation of any supernatural guidance or assistance; and whatever is unsuited unto its own prejudicate imaginations, it is ready to scorn and despise.

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That, therefore, which we are now to demonstrate is, that wher this pride and principle are predominant, where the one is not mor tified by grace nor the other eradicated by spiritual light, there me can never receive the truths of the gospel in a due manner, and ar ready to renounce them when they have by any means been brough unto the profession of them for a season; for,—

The gospel,—that is, the doctrines of it and truths contained in i —is proposed unto us in the name and on the authority of God, hav ing his image and superscription upon it. It hath such impression of divine wisdom, goodness, grace, holiness, and power upon it, a manifests it to be the "glorious gospel of the blessed God," 1 Tim. i. 11 Hence it ought to be received with a holy reverence, with a due sens of the glory of God, and as his voice speaking unto us from hea ven. Hence is the caution of the apostle, that we would "not refuse or "turn away from him that speaketh from heaven," Heb. xii. 25 Without this it will never be duly received, truly understood, no steadfastly believed. It is not to be received as "the word of men but as it is in truth, the word of God," 1 Thess. ii. 13. It must b received with that frame of spirit, with that submission, that subjec tion of soul and conscience, which becomes poor worms of the earth when they have to do with the great and holy God, expressed Gen xviii. 27. So our Saviour tells us that "unless we be converted, and become as little children, we cannot enter into the kingdom of God. Unless we deny ourselves and all our own imaginations, unless we become humble and teachable, we can never arrive at a useful ac quaintance with the mysteries of it. And he convinced the learned Pharisees that by reason of their pride, vain-glory, and hypocrisy they could not perceive or understand the doctrine which he taught

God promiseth that he will teach the meek or humble in judg ment: "The meek will he teach his way," Ps. xxv. 9. "The secret of the LORD is with them that fear him; and he will show them hi covenant," verse 14. "Whom shall he teach knowledge? whom shall he make to understand doctrine? them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts," Isa. xxviii. 9. Unless men become as weaned children, as David affirms of himself, Ps. cxxxi. 2 when "his heart was not haughty, nor his eyes lofty," verse 1 God will not teach them. There is, therefore, no such effectual ob struction of divine teachings as the pride of men's minds, which i utterly inconsistent with them. Hence it is that men come with carnal confidence in themselves, the ability and sagacity of their own minds, to the consideration of the gospel and the things contained in it, without the least peculiar awe or reverence of God from whom it is; and hence do they suppose themselves, without more ado competent judges of the mind of the Holy Ghost in all divine reve

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lations. Can men who have once read the Scripture imagine that this is the way to learn heavenly truth or to partake of the teachings of God? Will the same frame of spirit suffice them in this design as that which they have when they are exercised about their other occasions? When we consider how men for the most part learn the truth, we need not wonder to see how easily they unlearn and forsake it. If the truth at any time be entertained by a soul whose mind is unhumbled and whose affections are unmortified, it is a troublesome inmate, and will, on the first occasion, be parted withal. It is true, we ought to employ the utmost of our rational abilities in the investigation of sacred truth; but yet if therein we follow the conduct of our own minds, diving perhaps into subtilties and niceties, forsaking a humble dependence on the teachings of God, it may be under apprehensions of singular wisdom, we betray ourselves into ruinous folly. This was that which corrupted all the endeavours of the schoolmen, and left them, in the height of their inquiries, to wax vain in their imaginations. The way of handling spiritual things in a spiritual manner, in the words which the Holy Ghost teacheth,—that is, not with curious, subtile reasonings and inventions of carnal, unsanctified minds, but with that evidence and plainness in argumentation, suited practically to affect the minds and consciences of men, which the Scripture giveth us both example and rule for,—was despised by them; but they came to the study of sacred things with their minds stuffed and prepossessed with philosophical notions and conceptions, with sophisms, distinctions, and various expressions of the serpentine wits of men, which they mixed with divinity, or the doctrine of the Scripture, wofully corrupting, debasing, and perverting it thereby. Most of their disputes were such as had never had foundation nor occasion in the world, if Aristotle had not invented some odd terms and distinctions, remote from the common understanding and reason of men wiser than himself. To inquire into divine revelation with a holy, humble frame of heart, waiting and praying for divine teaching and illumination of mind, that themselves might be made wise in the knowledge of the mysteries of the gospel, and able to instruct others in the knowledge and fear of God, it never came into their minds; but being furnished and puffed up with a conceit of their own sagacity, philosophical ability, and disputing faculty, harnessed with syllogisms, distinctions, solutions, and most preposterous methods of craft, they came with boldness on Christian religion, and forming it to their own imaginations, dressing it up and exposing of it in foolish terms of art, under a semblance of wondrous subtilty they wholly corrupted it, and drew off the minds of men from the simplicity of the truth as it is in Christ Jesus. Not one article of religion did this proud, self-conceited generation

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of men leave, that (whether their conclusions were true or false about it) any man could come to the understanding of it who had not been a better proficient in the school of Aristotle than of Christ. To believe and teach the doctrine of the Scripture, though with sound reason and judgment, and in the way of the Scripture to affect the minds and consciences of men, without their philosophical notions, niceties, and distinctions, whereby they had carved a corrupt, depraved, monstrous image of all things, and the knowledge of them, was, among them, to be a heretic or a blockhead. By the pride, confidence, and pretended subtilty of these men was religion totally corrupted, and the fountains poisoned from whence others sought for the waters of the sanctuary. Even what was left of truth among them was so debased, so divested of its native heavenly glory, beauty, and majesty, was rendered so deformed and unsuited unto that spiritual light wherein alone it can be usefully discerned, as to render it altogether useless and inefficacious unto its proper ends. Nor are we ever in more danger to subduct ourselves from under the teachings of God than when we lean unto our own understandings in our inquiries into spiritual things, so as to forget that humble, lowly frame of heart wherein alone we are meet to be taught or to learn in a due manner. And this is one way whereby men, through the innate pride of their minds, are obstructed in the receiving and disposed unto the relinquishment of evangelical truths.

Again; it is confessed that there is nothing proposed unto us in the gospel that is contrary unto reason, as reason is the due comprehension and measure of things as they are in their own nature; for how should there be so, seeing it is in itself the principal external effect of the reason or wisdom of God, which hath given unto all things their natures, properties, and measures? But yet there are things revealed in it which are above the comprehension of reason, as planted in the finite, limited understanding of man; nor is the ground hereof the accidental corruption of our nature, but the essential constitution of its being. There are, I say, divine mysteries in the gospel whose revelation we may understand, but the nature of the things themselves we cannot comprehend. And this reason itself cannot but acknowledge; for whereas it knows itself to be finite, limited, and bounded, how should it be able perfectly to comprehend things infinite, or all the effects of infinite wisdom? "Can we by searching find out God? can we find out the Almighty unto perfection? It is high as heaven; what can we do? deeper than hell; what can we know? The measure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea," Job xi. 7–9. These things so exceed the natural and duly proportionate objects of our understandings as that we cannot find them out to perfection. The reason of man hath

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nothing here to do, but humbly to comply with the revelations that are made of them.

Moreover, there are in the gospel things that are unsuited, yea, contradictory unto reason as it is corrupted. Reason in us is now no longer to be considered merely as it is finite and limited, but as, in the subject and exercise of it, it is impaired, depraved, and corrupted. To deny this, is to deny the fundamental principle and supposition that, in all things, the gospel proceedeth on; that is, that Jesus Christ came into the world to restore and repair our nature. In this state, as it is unable of itself to discern and judge of spiritual things in a due manner, so it is apt to frame unto itself vain imaginations, and to be prepossessed with innumerable prejudices, contrary unto what the gospel doth teach and require; and whatever it doth so fancy or frame, the mind esteems as proper acts and effects of reason as any it exerciseth or is capable of.

With respect unto both these,—namely, the weakness of reason as it is finite and limited, and the depravation of reason as it is corrupted,—it is the design of the gospel to bring every thought into captivity unto the obedience of faith; for,—

1. As to the former, it requires men to believe things *above their reason*, merely on the authority of divine revelation. Things they must believe which "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have they entered into the heart of man to conceive;" only they are "revealed unto us by the Spirit," 1 Cor. ii. 9, 10. It will not admit of an inquiry how those things may be which the mouth of the Lord hath spoken. The sense and meaning of the revelation it may inquire into, but cannot comprehend the things revealed. "Nobis curiositate opus non est post Jesum Christum, nec inquisitione post evangelium; cum credimus nihil desideramus ultra credere, hoc enim prius credimus, non esse quod ultra credere debemus," Tertull. Præscrip. adv. Hæres. And when of old the wise, the scribes, the disputers of this world, would not submit hereunto, under the supposed conduct of their reason, they fell into the most brutish unreasonableness, in judging the wisdom of God to be folly and his power to be weakness, 1 Cor. i. 18–25. And it is an unparalleled attempt of atheism which some in our days (who would yet be accounted Christians) have engaged in;—they would exalt philosophy or human reason into a right of judicature over all divine revelations. Nothing must be supposed to be contained in them but what is measurable by its principles and rules. What pretends to be above them, they say ought to be rejected; which is to make itself infinite, or the wisdom and understanding of God finite and limited. Wherefore, as to the things that are revealed in the gospel, because many of them are absolutely above the comprehension of our minds or rea-

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sons, they are not the judges of them, but are the servants of faith only in bearing witness unto them; for "the things of a man knoweth the spirit of man which is in him; but the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God," 1 Cor. ii. 11. In brief, to affirm that we can be obliged to believe no more than we can comprehend, or nothing but what we can perfectly understand the nature of in itself, or that we may reject what is really above reason, on a supposition that it is contrary unto reason, is to renounce the gospel, and therewith all divine revelations. And this is spoken not of reason as it is corrupted, but merely as it is human reason, finite and limited.

2. As in things *infinite*, *spiritual*, and *heavenly*, the gospel proposeth unto men things quite above their comprehension, supposing their reason to be pure and incorrupted, only allowing it to be that which is finite and limited; so in things which practically respect the obedience of faith which it doth require, it prescribeth things contrary unto our natural conceptions, or reason as it is in us depraved: for the natural conceptions of our minds about religious duties and the way of living unto God are all of them suited unto the covenant of works, for they are the effects of the remainders of that light which did direct us to walk with God thereby. But hereunto the disposal of things in the covenant of grace is diametrically opposed, so that their accounts will never intermix, Rom. xi. 6; yea, the carnal mind,—that is, reason as it is corrupted,—acts its contradiction unto the will of God as revealed in the gospel with enmity and hatred, chap. viii. 7. And [as] for those duties which are suited unto the light of nature, the gospel doth so change them, with the respect it gives them unto the mediation of Christ and the efficiency of the Holy Spirit, as that corrupted reason defies them, being so qualified, as foreign unto its conceptions. The duties themselves it can approve of, but not of their respect unto Jesus Christ, whereunto they are disposed by the gospel.

Hence it is that of old those who pretended such an absolute sovereignty of their own reason as to admit of nothing as truth but what its dictates complied withal, were of all men the slowest to receive and the forwardest to oppose the mysteries of the gospel; because they were above it in some things, and contrary unto it in more, as it is in most things corrupted, they looked on them as folly, and so despised them. This the apostle declares and records, 1 Cor. i. ii. Especially was it so among them who, unto the vain imaginations wherein in general "their foolish heart was darkened," had superadded some peculiar sect in philosophy which was of reputation among the wise men of the world; for they conceived and maintained all the maxims of their sect as the absolute dictates of right

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reason, though most of them were foolish fancies, either taken up by tradition or sophistically imposed on their understandings. Hence, every thing that was contrary unto such principles or inconsistent with them, they looked on as opposite unto reason, and so despised it. Nor is it much otherwise at this day with many Christians, who make the traditional principles of their sect or party the rule whereby every thing that is in religion proposed unto them may be examined. Thus, though the generality of philosophers and wise men at Athens rejected the doctrine of the apostle, yet were there none so forward and fierce in their opposition unto him, so contemptuously proud in their censures of him, as were the Epicureans and Stoics, Acts xvii. 18; and the reason hereof was, because the doctrine which he taught was eminently contrary to the maxims of their peculiar sects: for whereas the Epicureans denied the providence of God in the government of the world, the existence of the souls of men after this life, all eternal rewards or punishments, there was no admission of any one word of the apostle's doctrine without a renunciation of all their impious sentiments, and so the ruin of their sect. And as for the Stoics, the fundamental principle of their philosophy was, that a man should look for all blessedness or happiness in and from himself alone, and from the things that were in his own power, as being every way sufficient unto himself for that end. All that the apostle taught concerning the mediation of Christ and the grace of God by him was also diametrically opposite unto this principle. Wherefore those of these two sects opposed him in a peculiar manner, not only from the pride and darkness that are naturally in the minds of men, and are improved by the advancement of corrupted reason above its own proper place and dignity, but from the prejudicate opinions which, on the reputation of their sects, they adhered unto, as assured dictates of right reason in general. And when some such persons as these afterward, upon a general conviction of its truth, took upon them a profession of the gospel, they were the men who corrupted its principal mysteries by their vain philosophy, as the apostle intimates, Col. ii. 8. So Tertullian, "Hæreses a philosophia subornantur. Inde Æones et formæ, et nescio quæ, et Trinitas hominum apud Valentinum, [qui] Platonicus fuerat. Inde Marcionis Deus melior de tranquillitate, a Stoicis venerat; et ubi anima interire dicatur ab Epicuræis observatur; et ut carnis restitutio negatur, de una omnium philosophorum schola sumitur."

We may apply these things unto our present purpose. The design of the gospel, in all its especial truths and mysteries, is to bring every thought into subjection unto the obedience of faith. Hence is that direction which flesh and blood will never comply withal, "If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him

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become a fool, that he may be wise," 1 Cor. iii. 18. Unless men renounce their carnal wisdom, in all its principles, effects, and operations, they will never become wise with that wisdom which is from above; and he who knoweth not what it is so to become a fool, be he who he will, was never yet wise towards God. Wherefore, when men have taken on them the outward profession of the gospel, they begin to find, upon inquiry, that the mysteries and principles of its doctrine are unsuited unto the natural pride of their minds, and inconsistent with that absolute sovereignty which they would in all things give unto their own reason. Hereon "many inventions are sought out" to cast off the yoke of faith, and to re-enthrone reason in the room thereof;—not that men depart from the faith with this express design, but this is that which secretly influenceth them thereunto. Hence the generality of those who forsake the truth on this ground and occasion are such as, trusting too soon to their own rational abilities, having neither will, nor humility, nor industry to inquire into the principles and reasons of truth in a due manner, do give up themselves unto the conduct and teaching of others, who have invented opinions more suited unto the innate pride of their minds and carnal reasonings; and some, by an over-earnest pursuit of the workings of their own rational faculties in spiritual things, having subducted their minds from that humble frame wherein alone they are capable of divine teaching, are betrayed into the same miscarriage. All ancient heresies sprung from this root, yea, those of them which are most absurd and foolish, and most diametrically opposite unto right reason, arose from a pretence thereof: for when men will have reason to have an absolute supremacy in religion, it is unavoidable but they must judge that their own is the reason which is intended; and that some may be led hereby into very foolish imaginations is easy to be conjectured, unless we shall suppose all men to be equally wise and sober.

I shall briefly exemplify these things in one instance, and that in a prevalent apostasy from the truth, and which at present is visibly progressive in the world; this is that of Socinianism. And I shall give an instance herein, because the poison of it is highly efficacious where it meets with the complexion and constitution of mind before described, and is more diffused than many are aware of: for although the name of it be generally condemned, and there are some opinions comprised under it whose profession is inconsistent with the interest of the most, yet all those deviations from the truth which we have amongst us, under several denominations, are emanations from that corrupt fountain; yea, the whole of it being a system of opinions craftily suited unto the first notions and conceptions of corrupted reason, and the inbred pride of men's minds, in them who on any

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account own divine revelation, the first proposal of them finds ready entertainment with many of those whose souls are not prepared and fortified against them by a spiritual experience of the excellency, power, and efficacy, of the mysteries of the gospel. They no sooner hear of them but they know they express what they would have, as gratifying all the corrupt desires and carnal reasonings of their minds.

There are, as was observed before, two sorts of things in the doctrines of the gospel:—1. Such as are *above* the comprehension and measure of reason in its best condition, as it is in us *limited* and *confined;* 2. Such as are *contrary* unto it as *corrupted* and *depraved.* And unto these two heads is this kind of apostasy reducible.

1. What is *above reason,* incomprehensible by it, those of this way do absolutely reject. Such are the doctrines of the Trinity and of the incarnation of the Son of God. Because the things taught in these doctrines are not comprehensible by *their* reason, they conclude that they are repugnant unto *right* reason. And by others the same doctrines are refused, as not compliant with the light that is within them; for the existence of the divine nature in three distinct persons, with the hypostatical union of the natures of God and man in the same person, they cannot acknowledge. These things, so fully, so plainly, so frequently revealed and asserted in the Scripture, so attested by the primitive catholic church, are rejected on no other reason but that they are *against* reason; nor is there any pretence that they are so, but because they are *above* it. When they have puzzled themselves with Nicodemus' question, "How can these things be?" they peremptorily deny their existence, because they cannot comprehend the manner of it.

2. As unto those things which are *contrary unto reason as corrupted,* these they deprave and wrest unto a compliance therewithal. So they deal with the doctrines of the attributes of God, of his eternal decrees, of the office and mediation of Christ, of justification by his righteousness, of the power and efficacy of the grace of the Holy Spirit in the conversion of sinners, and of the resurrection of the dead. Because they cannot bring their reason as corrupted and depraved unto a compliance with these truths, they will force, hale, torture, and rack the truths themselves, to bring them into slavery unto their own reasons, or carnal, fleshly conceptions of spiritual things; for, allowing the words, terms, and propositions wherein they are expressed, they put absurd senses upon them, destructive unto the faith and contrary to the whole scope and design of the Scripture. So do they endeavour expressly to bring every divine revelation into captivity unto the bondage of their own perverse reasonings and imaginations.

It is, therefore, evident that this kind of apostasy springs from no

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other root but the pride of the minds of men, refusing to admit of evangelical truths on the mere authority of divine revelation, where they are above reason as it is limited, or contrary unto it as corrupted. On these terms the gospel can nowhere keep its station nor will it forego its prerogative by subjecting itself to be tried by these uncertain measures or weighed in these uneven, tottering balances. The humble, the meek, the teachable, those who are made free and willing to captivate their understandings unto the obedience of faith, are those alone with whom it will abide and continue.

But it may be said, that, this being only one private heresy, of no great extent or acceptation in the world, there is no danger of any influence from it unto a more general defection. So, it may be, it seems unto many; but I must acknowledge myself to be otherwise minded, and that for two reasons:—

1. Because of *the advance which it maketh every day* in the addition of new, bold, proud imaginations unto what it hath already made its successful attempts in: for, in the pursuit of the same principles with those of the men of this way and persuasion, not a few begin absolutely to submit the Scripture, and every thing contained in it, to the judgment and sentence of their own reason; which is the true form and spirit of Socinianism, visibly acting itself with some more than ordinary confidence. What is suited unto their reason they will receive, and what is not so, let it be affirmed a hundred times in the Scripture, they will reject with the same ease and confidence as if they were imaginations of men like themselves. Both books that are written unto this purpose, and the common discourses of many, do fully testify unto this advance of the pride of the minds of men; and he is careless about these things who seeth not that the next stage is downright atheism. This is that dunghill which such blazing exhalations of pride do at last fall into. And herein do many countenance themselves with a false and foolish pretence that all those whom they differ from are fanatical enemies of reason, when they ascribe unto it all that any man in his wits can so do who believeth divine revelation, and doth not absolutely disavow the corruption of nature by the fall.

2. The *poison of these principles is greatly diffused in the world;* for hence it is that all those doctrines of the gospel which have any thing of spiritual mystery in them, which are constituent principles of, or do any way belong unto, the covenant of grace, and so not absolutely reconcilable unto reason as corrupt and carnal, are by many so laden with contempt and scorn that it is sufficient to expose any man unto the contumelies of "ignorant, irrational, and foolish," who dares to avow them. Such are the doctrines of eternal predestination, of the total corruption of the nature of men as unto spiritual

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things by the fall, of the power and efficacy of the grace of God in the conversion of sinners, of the nature and necessity of regeneration, of union with Christ, of justification by the imputation of his righteousness, of the nature of internal, inherent righteousness or evangelical holiness, of the necessity of continual supplies of the Spirit in actual grace unto all duties of obedience, of the power of the Holy Ghost evidencing the divine authority of the Scriptures in and by themselves, with sundry others. Many can see no reason for the admittance of these things, or they cannot see the reason of them; and therefore, although they are fully and plainly declared in the Scriptures, yet are they, by no small generation among us, so derided and exploded as that the very names of them are grown into contempt. But why all this scorn, all this severity? Men may do well to consider, that not long since all the prelates of England owned those doctrines as articles of faith which now they so deride; and although they are not obliged by any divine precept to be of the same judgment with them because it was theirs, yet it may be they are under some obligation from the laws of the land not to renounce the ancient doctrines of the church, and are certainly bound by the laws of Christian modesty and sobriety not to vilify and scorn the doctrines they owned, and all that do profess them.

But it is warrant sufficient unto some for the utmost detestation of any principles in religion, that they have a seeming incompliance with their reason, though apparently corrupted by prejudice and weakened by ignorance. Hence they will not admit that there can be a consistency between the unchangeableness of God's decrees and the freedom of our wills; that justification by the blood of Christ doth not render our own obedience needless; that the efficacy of God's grace and the necessity of our duty are reconcilable. And herein they seem to take along with them, as their security, these two principles, seeing without them they have no foundation to build upon:—

(1.) That *reason as it acts in them is the same with right reason in general*,—that whatever respect is due to the one is so to the other. It were well, in the meantime, if prejudices, corrupt affections, and gross ignorance, did not, on great variety of occasions, manifest themselves among this sort of persons; and not only so, but such a course of conversation among some of them as none can think consistent with the divine teachings who believe the Scriptures. But it is so come to pass, that all that humility, meekness, self-diffidence, all that conscientious fear of sinning and practice of holiness, which the word of God makes so necessary unto them who would learn the truth as it is in Jesus, are by many (puffed up with a conceit of their own ability to know all things) utterly disregarded.

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(2.) That *there is no time or instance wherein those thoughts which seem to us most rational are to be captivated unto the obedience of faith;* and yet without this there is no true knowledge of the mind of God in the gospel to be attained. What such principles will carry men out unto in religion were easy to conjecture, if experience did not render conjecture useless in this case.

Wherefore, this pride of the minds of men, refusing to bow or subject themselves unto the authority of divine revelation, designing to exalt self, in its intellectual and moral abilities, in its powers to know what it should and do what it ought, hath in all ages been a great principle of opposition unto and apostasy from evangelical truth: nor was it ever more rampant than in the days wherein we live; for besides that it hath openly spawned that whole brood of errors which some entire sects do espouse, it diffuseth itself in its effects among all sorts of professors of Christianity. An humble subjection of mind and conscience unto the authority of God in his word,—which alone, upon trial, will be found to answer the experience of believers,—is the only security against this distemper. This we may, this we ought to pray for, not only for ourselves, but that it might be given of God unto them who scarce believe that God gives any thing that is spiritual and supernatural unto the souls of men, in any such way as that the effect should depend on the efficiency of grace, and not on their own wills.

Unto this pride, as inseparable from it, we may adjoin that vanity and curiosity that are in the minds of men. These are those which the apostle marketh under the outward sign and effect of them, namely, "itching ears," 2 Tim. iv. 3; for hence an inclination and hankering of mind after things novel, vain, and curious, doth arise. Under the power of these affections, men "cannot endure sound doctrine," nor will abide in the simplicity of the gospel. They know not how to be wise unto sobriety, and to keep their speculations about spiritual things within the bounds of sober modesty; but they are still intruding themselves into things they have not seen, being vainly puffed up by their own fleshly minds, Col. ii. 18. And as this curiosity hath produced many of these needless, vain opinions, subtle, nice, philosophical disputations and distinctions, wherewith some have filled religion; so from the uncured vanity of mind doth proceed that levity and inconstancy which are in many, whereby they are "tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine" that blows upon them, from the "cunning sleights of men who lie in wait to deceive."

Unto all we may add carnal pride and ambition (where the outward affairs of the church or the profession of religion are accompanied with such secular advantages of wealth, honour, and rule,

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as to stir up envy and emulation among men of earthly minds); which, as they have occasioned many scandalous outrages in religion, so they have been the rise and occasion of many heresies also.

IV. *Careless security and groundless confidences* do betray men into apostasies from the gospel when unexpected trials do befall them. To give evidence hereunto we may do well to consider the things that ensue:—

1. The Holy Spirit hath sufficiently warned us all that defections and backslidings from the truth would fall out among the professors of it. This hath been already abundantly manifested in the *express instances of such warnings and predictions* before produced and insisted on. And there is in the word a vehement application made of all these warnings unto us and our duties. Hence are those exhortations and precepts multiplied, to "watch," to "stand fast in the faith," to "be strong and quit ourselves like men" in this matter. Nothing but a diligent attendance unto all gospel duties and a vigorous acting of all gospel graces will preserve us, if the Scripture may be believed. And as for those by whom these things are despised, it is no matter at all what religion they are of.

2. We are foretold and forewarned of the great *danger* that will attend the professors of the gospel when such a season of apostasy shall by any means come upon them. So prevalent shall the means of it be as that many shall be deceived, and if it were possible even the elect themselves, Matt. xxiv. 11, 24. Such a season is an "hour of temptation that cometh on all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth," Rev. iii. 10; and the woful event in them that shall be overtaken with the power of it, in their utter and eternal destruction, is in many instances set before us.

3. It is also plainly intimated that such a season of the prevalency of a defection from the truth shall be a time of *great security* among the generality of professed Christians. Churches shall be asleep, persons shall cry, "Peace, peace," when that day cometh as a snare.

We are not, therefore, left without sufficient warning in this case, both of the certainty of our trial, the greatness of our concernment, and the danger of security; and yet, notwithstanding all these means of excitation unto a vigorous attendance unto our condition, danger, and duty, it is evident unto every discerning eye how desperately secure are the generality of professors of the gospel with respect unto this evil and the consequents of it. Nothing can awake them unto the consideration of their own state, although their neighbours' houses are set on fire from hell. Love of the world, with prosperity and ease, on the one hand, or the cares and businesses of it on the other, do so take up the minds of men that they are not sensible of any concernment in these things. And we may briefly consider the various

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ways whereby this security puts forth its efficacy in disposing men unto apostasy when they fall into the occasions of it:—

(1.) It doth so by possessing and overpowering them with a proud, careless, supine *negligence*. Men hear of this evil and the danger of it, but, like Gallio, they "care for none of these things." They know not of any concernment they have in them, nor of any need they have to provide against them. Unto some others, perhaps, these things may belong, but unto them not at all. Those who would press them on their minds and consciences they look on as persons causelessly importunate, or troubled with groundless suspicions and fears. If there be any danger about religion, they doubt not but sooner or later provision will be made against it by law; but as unto any special duty incumbent on themselves with respect unto their own souls, they know nothing of it, nor will consider it. Had not the world been asleep in this security, had not men been utterly regardless of their interest in the truth, it had not been possible that religion should have been so totally corrupted as it was in the Papacy, and yet so few take any notice thereof. At some seasons God raised up among them witnesses for the truth, who not only declared and professed it, but also sealed their confession with their blood; but the generality of Christians were so far from being excited thereby to the consideration of their own concern and duty as that they opposed and persecuted them unto destruction, as the disturbers of the public tranquillity. And it is no otherwise at this day. Many complain of, more fear, a defection from the gospel. It is also evident in how many things the doctrine of it is already by some corrupted by whom it was formerly professed. Instances of as great apostasies as the name of Christianity is capable of are multiplied among us; and yet how few are there that do at all regard these things, or once consider what is either their duty or their danger in such a season!

(2.) It worketh and is effectual by a *wicked indifferency* as unto all things in religion. Men under the power of this security neither see, nor will understand, nor can be made sensible of, the difference that is between truth and error, piety and superstition, so as to value one more than another. "It is all religion, and it is no more but so. If persons change from one way to another, so as they do not utterly renounce Jesus Christ, they may be saved in the way they betake themselves unto." The profession of such persons attends on all occasions, and an apostasy from the mysteries of the gospel will be but a useful compliance with opportunity.

We judge no men, no party of men, as to their eternal state and condition, upon the account of their outward profession in religion, unless they are open idolaters or flagitious in their lives. God only knows how it is between him and their souls. The framing of

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churches (as the church of Rome) according unto men's minds, fancies, opinions, or interests, and then confining salvation unto them, is an effect of pride and folly, as contradictory to the gospel as any thing that can be imagined. But yet there is a wide difference to be made between apostates and others. "Better men had never known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment." Those who have been instructed in the truth of the gospel, and have made profession of it, are for the most part acted by such depraved principles, moved by such corrupt lusts, and do show so much ingratitude against the Lord Jesus Christ in their defection, "denying the Lord that bought them," that they put a peculiar character and mark upon themselves; and although we will not judge any, yet is it our duty to put men in remembrance of the danger that attends such apostasies. So the apostle expressly tells the Galatians, that upon their admittance of legal ceremonies, and falling from the grace of the gospel in the one point of justification, "Christ should profit them nothing," or they should have no benefit by what they yet retained of the profession of the gospel, chap. v. 2–6. And as to those who are carried away by the "strong delusion" of the grand apostasy, foretold 2 Thess. ii. 3–12, he says plainly that "they shall be damned," verse 12; and Peter also affirms that those who introduce "damnable heresies" do bring on themselves, and those that follow their pernicious ways, "swift destruction," 2 Pet. ii. 1, 2. So little countenance doth the Scripture give unto this effect of cursed security.

(3.) It likewise worketh by *vain confidences*. Most men think with Peter, and on no better grounds than he did (nor so good neither, as not being conscious unto themselves of so much sincerity as he was), that though all men should forsake the truth and purity of religion, yet they will not do so. But they understand not at all what it is to be preserved in an hour of temptation, nor what is required thereunto. They scorn to fall away, and yet they scorn all the means whereby they may be preserved from so doing. Tell them that they stand in need of the power of God for their preservation, of the intercession of Christ, of the constant supplies of the Spirit, of an experience of the goodness and efficacy of the truth, with the benefits which their own souls have received thereby; and that for this end they are to watch, pray, and live in a constant attendance unto all evangelical duties; and they despise them all through their pride, or neglect them through their spiritual sloth that they are given up unto. Such persons as these, if they meet with any thing that mates[1] their confidence, fall at once under the power of the next temptation they are assaulted withal.

[1] "Upsets," or "confounds."—Ed.

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Wherefore, whereas the generality of professed Christians are influenced, one way or other, by this woful security, it is no wonder i they are surprised and hurried away from their profession by seducers, or that they will be easily carried down the stream wher they fall into a general inclination unto a defection.

V. *Love of this present world and the perishing satisfactions of it* betrays innumerable souls into frequent apostasies from the gospel. So the apostle assures us in the instance of Demas: 2 Tim iv. 10, "Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world." And as he forsook the apostle, so also the work of the ministry, and it may be Christianity therewithal. I shall not insist on that love of the world which works by covetousness in the course of men's lives, though this be a means also disposing them unto apostasy; for our Saviour affirms that the "seed which falls among thorns is choked,"—the word which is received by men whose hearts are filled with the cares of this present world never comes to the perfection of fruit-bearing. I shall only make mention of *two seasons* wherein the predominancy of this love in the hearts of men multiplies apostates from the truth.

The first is that of *persecution*, wherein the professors compared by our Saviour unto the stony ground do presently fall away. "Such persons," saith he, "have no root in themselves, but, during for a while, when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, they are offended," Matt. xiii. 20, 21. The first thing that persecution attacks the minds of men withal is their secular interests in this world; their wealth, their houses, lands, and possessions, are put into hazard by it. Willing, it may be, this sort of men are to follow Christ for a while, with the young man in the gospel; but when they hear that all they have will be hazarded, it may be must be parted withal, they go away sorrowful. Sorry they are for a while to leave that word or doctrine which before they had received with joy, as Matt. xiii. 20, but sorrowful as they are, love of the world overcomes all other considerations, and away they go. What multitudes such seasons have driven from the truth, what stars they have cast down from heaven, no nation hath had greater experience than our own in the days of Queen Mary. I pray God it never meet with another trial, and also hope that it is not likely so to do!

The other season when love of the world gives up men unto this fatal evil is, when and where *superstition and error are enthroned*. We may look into some foreign nations where the gospel had once taken great place, especially a great part of the nobles were obedient unto the faith; but the supreme power of the nations abiding in the hands of those of the Roman profession, and therewith the disposal of authority, riches, and honour, those vain bubbles of the

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world, and idols of corrupted minds, it is known what influence it hath had upon the profession of religion, most of the posterity of those great and truly noble persons which once professed the protestant religion being in most places fallen back into the old apostasy: for, their minds being filled with the love of this world, and precipitated by ambition into a fierce pursuit of their desires, finding the way to worldly honour and wealth shut up unto all that would steadfastly adhere unto the truth, they have generally sacrificed their convictions, consciences, and souls, unto this predominant lust. And such a season as this is more to be feared than persecution itself. Many have a generous stoutness not to be violently forced out of their persuasion and profession; but when these cursed baits are laid before men, with various pretences to stifle their consciences and advantages to keep up their reputation, there is no setting up a dam against the torrent of their love of this world. The warmth of the sun caused *him* to cast away his garment which the blustering of the wind did but wrap closer about him. The rays of power in honours and favours have made more cast away their religion in the neighbouring nations than persecutors ever could do. Whilst, therefore, the world is enthroned in the minds of men, whilst it is made their idol, whilst hopes of advance and fears of loss are the principal affections whereby their course of life is steered, profession of the truth stands upon very uncertain and ticklish terms. And therefore, whilst we see that the minds of multitudes are under the power of this lust, all the security which can be had of their continuance in the profession of the truth is their not being led into either of the temptations mentioned.

I shall not insist on other depraved affections of the minds of men. The truth is, there is no one prevalent lust, no one predominant sin, no spiritual or moral disorder indulged unto, but it disposeth the soul first unto an under-valuation and then to a relinquishment of the truth, as occasions are offered.

VI. *The hand of Satan is in this matter.* He was the head of the first apostasy from God. Having himself fallen away from that place and order in the obediential part of the creation wherein he was made, the first work he engaged in (and he did it effectually) was, to draw mankind into the guilt of the same crime and rebellion; and ever since the revelation of the means of recovery for man (from which he was justly excluded), he hath pursued the same design towards all unto whom that way of recovery is proposed. Thus he quickly carried away the whole old world upon the matter into idolatry. And ever since God hath been pleased to make known the way of life and salvation by Jesus Christ, his two great designs and works in the world have been to keep men off from receiving

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the gospel, and to turn them aside who have received it. The first he managed two ways,—first, by stirring up raging, bloody persecutions against them that professed it, to deter others from engaging into the like way; and the other, by blinding the eyes of men, and filling them with prejudices against the truth, as the apostle declares, 2 Cor. iv. 4. By what ways and means in particular he carried on this first design, in both parts of it, belongs not unto our present inquiry. Failing herein, his principal design in the world hath been, and continueth yet to be, the corrupting of the minds of men about the truth, and drawing them off from it, in part or in whole. So the apostle intimates, 2 Cor. xi. 3, "I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ." It was the serpent by whom Eve was beguiled, but who is it the apostle is jealous that the Corinthians might have their minds corrupted by, from the simplicity that is in Christ; that is, by false doctrine, or, as it were, "another gospel," as he speaks, verse 4? It was the same serpent, by himself and in his agents, as he expresseth it, verses 14, 15. And he compareth his attempt to draw off professors from the gospel unto his attempt on Eve, whereby he began the apostasy from God in the state of nature. The tenor of the covenant was proposed unto our first parents in the prohibition of eating of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, and the threatening annexed thereunto; and he beguiled Eve by corrupting the threatening by his false interpretation of it, whereby he corrupted her mind. The tenor of the covenant of grace is proposed unto us principally in the promises of the gospel, which are the centre of the whole doctrine of it. These, therefore, he endeavours by all means to pervert, in opposition unto the wisdom and grace of God in them. Hereby he hopes to draw off men from the simplicity that is in Christ, or the plain declaration of the will of God in the gospel, unto false and foolish imaginations of his own suggestion. And what a hand he was to have in the great apostasy the apostle foretells, 2 Thess. ii. 9–11. There was to be the working of Satan in it, and strong or effectual delusions, unto the belief of lies; which are all from him, who is the father of them. So men departed from the faith by "giving heed to seducing spirits," 1 Tim. iv. 1,—that is, to the devil and his agents. It would be too long a digression, to engage into a particular inquiry how, by what ways and means, Satan prevails with men to turn them off from the truth, and turn them unto fables. How he blinds their minds, how he inflames their lusts, how he presents occasions, how he suggests temptations, with false and corrupt reasonings; what colours and pretences he puts upon his designs when he transforms himself into an angel of light; with what power, signs, and lying wonders, he gives

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countenance to his delusions; how he works on the minds of seducers, how on the minds of them that are to be seduced; how he stirs up persecution against the truth and its profession,—would require a discourse, fully to declare, longer than the whole of this is designed to be. It may suffice to know that he is not weary nor wanting unto any of those manifold advantages which are administered unto him. He is at work in all places at this day; in some, making havoc of the churches; in others, by various wiles and artifices, filling the minds of men with prejudices against the truth, and turning them from it.

Lastly, God doth not look on all these things as an *unconcerned spectator*. He, indeed, "is not tempted with evil;" he tempteth none, he seduceth none; but he rules them all, and overrules all events unto his own glory. He will not suffer men first to undervalue and despise, and then to reject and forsake, the chiefest of his mercies, such as his word and truth are, without reflecting on them with some acts of his severity. Wherefore, when men, from the corrupt principles mentioned, seduced by the lusts of their own hearts and entangled by the deceits of Satan, do relinquish the truth, God, in his holy, righteous judgment, gives them up unto *farther delusions*, so that they shall complete their apostasy, and grow obstinate therein unto their destruction. When a people, a nation, a church, or private persons, have received the gospel and the profession thereof, not walking answerably thereunto, God may forsake them, and withdraw from them the means of their edification and preservation. The rule of his continuance with any people or church, as to the outward dispensation of his providence and the means of grace, is that expressed 2 Chron. xv. 2, "The LORD is with you, while ye be with him; and if ye seek him, he will be found of you; but if ye forsake him, he will forsake you." He judicially forsakes them by whom he is wilfully forsaken.

God may be forsaken by men in one way, and he may righteously forsake them in another. For instance, under the profession of the truth, men may give up themselves unto all ungodliness and unrighteousness, unto a flagitious course of life in all abominations, so holding the truth captive in unrighteousness. In this case God ofttimes, in a way of punishment, gives men up unto an apostasy from the truth which they have professed, to show that he will not always have it prostituted unto the lusts of men. So the apostle speaks expressly, 2 Thess. ii. 10–12. Although they received the truth in the profession of it, yet they loved it not; they yielded not obedience unto it, but took pleasure in sin: therefore God ordered things so that they should reject the truth itself also, and believe lies, unto their own destruction. Herein at this day lies the danger of a total and ruinous

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apostasy. Multitudes, the generality of all sorts, the body of th people, do yet assent unto and profess the truth; but, alas! what ar the lives and conversations of many under that profession? How d all manner of sins abound among us! The profession of the trut by not a few is the greatest dishonour and disparagement that ca be cast upon it. The best service many can do it is by forsaking i and declaring that the belief of it is inconsistent with their curse wicked lives. And may we not justly fear lest such persons shoul speedily be given up, by one means or other, to "strong delusio to believe a lie," unto their just damnation? And on the other hand also, God sometimes gives men up to sins and wickednesses in prac tice, because of the rejection of the truth which they have received So he dealt with them who liked not those notions of truth whic they had concerning him, his being and his providence, from th light of nature, Rom. i. 28. And so he usually deals with all apos tates. If they will forsake the truth, they shall forsake righteous ness and holiness, which are the proper fruits of it, and be given u unto all abominable lusts and practices.

We may therefore inquire by what ways and means God doth s punish and revenge the beginnings of wilful apostasy from the gos pel, so that men shall complete them and prove obstinate in ther unto their eternal destruction. And this he doth,—

First, By *removing his candlestick* from among them. This th Lord Jesus threatens his backsliding church withal, Rev. ii. 5. Go will, by one means or another, deprive them of the light and mean of the knowledge of the truth, so that ignorance and darkness shal cover them and irresistibly increase upon them. Some of the in struments of light, it may be, shall be taken away by death, an some shall lie under prejudices; the gifts of the Spirit shall be re strained or withheld from others, that they shall have darkness fo vision, and "the sword of the LORD shall be upon their right ey that it shall be quite dried up." In this condition of things, th minds of apostates, already bent upon backsliding, are, by their ignor ance and darkness, more and more filled with prejudices against th truth, and alienated from it; for as they lose the knowledge and fait of any part of truth, their minds are possessed with what is opposit thereunto.

Secondly, In this condition God "sends them strong delusio that they may believe a lie," 2 Thess. ii. 11. God is, as it were, no resolved on the end of these persons,—what they have righteousl deserved; and therefore he makes use of any means, as it is merel penal, to bring them thereunto. And as by the former act of hi displeasure he took from them the knowledge of his truth, so by thi he gives them up irrecoverably to adhere unto a lie. They shall no

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only profess it, but believe it; which is the cruellest slavery the mind of man is capable of. Now, God's sending on men "strong delusion, that they may believe a lie," consists in these things:—

1. *Delivering them up to the power of Satan.* He is the grand seducer, the deluder of the souls of men, the first author of lying, whose principal design it is to win over the faith and assent of men thereunto. This work he stands continually ready for, but that God is pleased to limit, bound, and restrain him, with respect unto those who are yet under his especial care. But as to these apostates, God breaks down all his fences about them, and by his efficacious permission suffers Satan to act his part to the utmost for their delusion. This was the state of things under the papal apostasy, wherein Satan had deluded men, as it should seem, to the satisfaction of his utmost malice; and to show how absolute he was in his success, he did, as it were, make sport with the deluded souls of men. There was nothing so foolish and sottish that he did not impose on their credulity. Many volumes will not contain the stories of those ridiculous follies which he so imposed on the minds of poor deluded mortals, wherein he seemed to sport himself in the misery of blinded mankind. God grant that he never receive a commission to act the same part among us, whose sins seem to cry aloud for it, and men live as if they longed to be again given up to the power of the devil!

2. By suffering *seducers* and *false teachers* to come among a people with such advantageous outward circumstances as shall further their success. These seducers prepare themselves for their work by their own inclinations and the suggestions of Satan; but God, for the executing of his just displeasure, will, by his providence, put advantages into their hands of prevailing over the minds of men. So the chief seducers in the world at this day,—namely, the pope and those acting with or under him,—have possessed such place and obtained such reputation among men as gives them ofttimes an uncontrollable success in their work. Did men stand upon even ground with them who were in the profession of the truth, should any so come unto them to persuade them unto the errors, superstitions, and idolatry of the Papacy, they could not but despise their offer; but these men having once gotten the name of "The temple of God," and showing themselves to the people in the stead and place of God, what could they not draw and seduce them unto? Neither is their superstition or profession continued on any other grounds on the minds of the multitude, but only by that power over the consciences of men which names, titles, and the places they seem to possess in the church, do give unto them. Then, therefore, doth God give up men to delusions, when in his providence he affords such advantages unto them by whom they are to be deluded; for those who pos-

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sess the places of outward veneration may lead a backsliding multitude unto what they please.

Lastly, God doth *judicially* smite such persons with *blindness of mind and hardness of heart*, that they shall not see, nor perceive, nor understand, even when the means of light and truth are proposed unto them. This effect of God's severity is declared, Isa. vi 9, 10; and application is made of it unto the Jews under the ministry of our Saviour himself, John xii. 39–41, and that of the apostles, Acts xxviii. 25–27, and is expounded, Rom. xi. 7, 8.

When things are come to this issue; when God subducts the means of grace from men in whole or in part, or as unto their efficacy; when he permits Satan to deceive them by strong delusions; and, moreover, himself smites them with hardness of heart and blindness of mind,—then is the state of such apostates miserable and irrecoverable. We are not, therefore, to think it strange that the light of the gospel diffuses itself no more in the world,—that so eminent a stop is put unto its progress. God hath put an end unto his gracious dealings with some kinds of apostates, and they are reserved for another dispensation of his providence.

These are some of the general principles of that defection which is in the world from the mystery and truth of the gospel, with the reasons and causes of them; unto which more, I doubt not, of the like nature may be added.

But there is, moreover, a particular consideration to be had of those especial truths which any turn away from, and the imaginations they fall into; whereof the especial grounds and reasons, superadded unto those we have considered, as equally respecting every kind of defection from the gospel, are also to be inquired into; and it shall be done in one instance among ourselves.

CHAPTER VII.

Instance of a peculiar defection from the truth of the gospel; with the reasons of it.

BESIDES the reasons insisted on, which have a general influence into all apostasies from the doctrine or mystery of the gospel, each especial defection in every kind hath reasons and causes peculiarly suited unto its rise and furtherance. There are, indeed, not a few who forsake the truth which they have professed merely on the impressions of outward circumstances, in the encouraging examples of some who go before them in the same paths, from whom they expect advantage. And every age giveth us, in one place or another,

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renewed evidence, that,—where either secular interest or weariness of the truth, through the love of the present world and hatred of holiness or strict evangelical obedience, doth give a propensity unto a declension from any doctrines of the gospel unto persons whose grandeur and outward advantages are sufficient to attract a compliance from the minds of men under the power of ambition, or any importunate desire of earthly things,—multitudes of all sorts suppose there is nothing left for them but to crowd who shall come nearest the leaders in the apostasy. And it is not seldom that, meeting with new temptations, they outrun both them and themselves also into such extremes as at first they designed not; for hence it is that so many do even at present issue their recessions from the truth, under the conduct of those "ignes fatui" or erratic exhalations of countenance and favour, in the undesigned bogs of Popery on the one hand, or Socinianism on the other. But I shall not at present take them into farther consideration; nor, indeed, are *they* worthy of any at all whose minds are visibly biassed, in the profession of things spiritual and heavenly, with those that are earthly and carnal.

They are of another sort from whom we may take an instance of the especial reasons of a peculiar defection from the gospel; for it is manifest how some among ourselves are fallen off from the whole mystery of it, with respect unto the person and grace of Christ, the satisfaction for sin made by his death, the atonement by the blood of his sacrifice, justification by his righteousness, and sanctification by his Spirit. If any shall think themselves unduly charged herein, they may be pleased to know that none are intended but those who are really guilty. Whosoever owns the things mentioned, though he will causelessly make use of peculiar words of his own for their expression, neither scriptural nor proper, nor such as believers have in former ages been accustomed unto, yet whilst the things themselves are believed and received, at present we lay nothing to his charge. But unless, to secure a groundless, useless, irrational charity, we wilfully shut our eyes and stop our ears, we cannot avoid the evidence that these things are by many even totally renounced: yea, and this is done by them to the greatest disadvantage of themselves and dishonour of the truth that can be well imagined; for their profession is, that they have tried Christ and the gospel in these things, and find there is nothing in them for which they should abide in the faith of them or place their confidence in them.

I hope none of them have gone unto such length as to cast themselves under the dreadful doom in the apostolical passage insisted on; but that their condition is dangerous cannot be denied. To prevent the like state in ourselves and others, we may do well to consider what are the true, real, next and immediate springs and

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reasons of such men's apostasy from the mystery of the gospel, as added unto the general reasons of all apostasy of this kind before mentioned; for so it is, that besides those general reasons and causes which have their efficacy and influence in all apostasies, and must always be considered in this matter, there are also reasons that are peculiar unto every especial instance of backsliding in any kind.

First, *Ignorance of the necessity of Jesus Christ and the benefits of his mediation* unto life and salvation hath betrayed them first into an indifferency about them, and then into a defection from them. They want a true, and in their own souls a full, conviction of their personal want of these things. Such apostates arise out of loose, notional professors, who never had any sound convictions of the want of Christ, like them [mentioned in] Acts ii. 37, or him, chap. xvi. 30. And although they lived, some of them, a long time in the outward profession that such a conviction of the worth and use of Christ and his grace was necessary unto them that would be saved, yet dare they not own that ever themselves had any such conviction; for if they had, why do they now forsake him as unto those ends for which they were convinced he was so to be desired? *That* faith alone will never forsake Christ which springs out of or is built on a conviction of the want of him. They who are well and in health will not always esteem the physician.

Unto this conviction of the want of Christ two things are required in all men, according to the measure of the light which they have received:—

1. The *knowledge of the nature, guilt, filth, and desert of sin:* for he came to save us from our sins; and no man will look after him to be delivered from he knows not what, or look to the brazen serpent who is not stung. Few have any knowledge hereof but what they cannot avoid, and fewer are sensible of these things in a due manner. The great design of Satan at this day in the world is, to extenuate sin in opinion, and so countenance it in practice. Indeed, it ever was so; but it is in a peculiar manner at present visible and open, though the conspiracy be so strong that a public resistance unto it is scarcely maintainable. His aim in it is, and ever was, to take off from the necessity and usefulness of Christ and his grace, against which his malice is principally bent; and when once he can convey away the relief, he will be ready enough to aggravate the evil. Hence are those opinions so diligently advanced and greedily embraced against the guilt and power of original sin and the depravation of our nature, wherein men of all sorts conspire. Whatever some men may design, his end in them all is no other but to prevent a conviction of the want we have of Christ. So, also, are

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sins in practice extenuated; spiritual sins against the gospel are made nothing of, yea, laughed at, and immoralities against the law are lightly esteemed and easily passed over. To take off at present a sense of the want of Christ, and to make way for future apostasy, is the end of these and the like corrupt opinions. Accordingly it is come to pass in the world. Never was there less regard of the person and offices of Christ, of his grace, and benefits of his mediation, among them that are called Christians, than is found among many at this day. Unless God graciously relieve, the world is like to lose Christ out of the gospel, as to the true glory of his person and use of his mediation. Thus was it with the generality of them concerning whom we speak. They never had a thorough practical conviction of the want of Christ; for if they had had, they would not so shamefully have left him as they have done. The general notions they had hereof serve only to entitle them unto a defection. I know these things are despised by many, unto whom the want of Christ and the receiving of him, or an interest in him, are contemptible things. But that is all one. We must not forego the gospel, with our own experience, and ruin our souls, to escape their reproaches. Sin will be sin, and Christ will be Christ, and salvation by him will be what it is, when they have done what they can.

2. Hereunto is required a *knowledge and sense of the weakness of the best of our duties*, and their utter *insufficiency* to abide the trial in the sight of God. Without the former we cannot have, and without the latter we can never abide in, a sense of the want of Christ. A right consideration of the instability of our minds in them, the weak actings of grace for the most part, the weariness of the flesh that accompanies them, secret impressions from self, and inward oppositions from sin, that attend them, with the greatness and holiness of God with whom we have to do in them, is indispensably necessary to keep the Lord Christ and his grace always desirable unto us. Want hereof makes some dream of a perfection in themselves, and others of a justification by their own obedience; the first tending to the contempt, the latter unto the neglect, of Christ and his grace. This is the beginning of transgression unto many apostates. They never had *a due sense of the want of Christ*, either as to their deliverance from the guilt of sin, or as to the procuring of a righteousness wherewith they might appear in the presence of God. This are they to inquire after who shall endeavour their recovery. To contend with them about their own imaginations is, for the most part, endless and fruitless. Let it be inquired whether they ever had any conviction of the want of Christ for the pardon of sin, or for the obtaining of life and salvation. If they shall grant they had, it may be asked why they do not make use of him unto the ends with re-

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spect whereunto they were convinced of the want of him; and if they do so, we have no contest with them in this matter. If they acknowledge that they never had any such conviction, this is that which we are to confirm, that such a conviction of the want of Christ is indispensably necessary unto the salvation of all that are adult; and herein we have the testimony, upon the matter, of the whole Scripture, the law and the gospel, to confirm the truth we contend for. Want, therefore, hereof was one spring of this defection. For those who have owned the necessity of him, or an interest in him, for the ends mentioned, and afterward declare that there is nothing of goodness or truth in what they have found and discovered for which they should continue so to do, their profession is, that they have considered this matter, known it, and do condemn it; wherein the formal nature of apostasy doth consist. And all those disciples which they draw after them, they do it by hiding from them, or drawing them off from, any sense of a want of Christ or of his mediation. That which is the foundation of our profession, in opposition hereunto, which we lay the weight of all our eternal concerns upon, is, that without Christ, before we receive him as set forth by God to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, we are in a lost, undone, and accursed condition; that our closing with him, our believing in him, is upon a conviction of our want of him for life, righteousness, and acceptation with God, both before and after believing. And it is in vain for Satan himself to attempt the faith of God's elect herein. A concurrence of plain revelation and evident experience is invincible. But he who never knew, who never was made deeply sensible of, the want of an interest in Christ, will never persevere in the pursuit of it, nor abide in what he hath attained, when attacked by any vigorous temptation.

Secondly, *Want of a spiritual view of the excellency of Christ*, both in his person and offices, is another spring and cause of this declension from the faith of the gospel. This view of him in types, shadows, and promises, was the life of the faith of the saints under the old testament. Herein "Abraham saw his day, and rejoiced," John viii. 56. So Cant. ii. 8, 17. And it is mentioned as their chiefest privilege, Isa. xxxiii. 17. These things they diligently inquired into, 1 Pet. i. 11, and longed after, desiring, if it were possible, to see them, Matt. xiii. 17; for the glory and life of all religion, of all intercourse with God, lay in them from the giving of the first promise. Christ was "all and in all" unto them, no less than unto us. Take a respect unto him and his offices out of the old administrations, and they are things of no value or signification. And it was better for them who were inquiring after Christ diligently under dark types and shadows, than it will be for those among us

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who shut their eyes at the glorious light of the gospel. And the reason why he was rejected by the Jews at his coming (for "he came unto his own, and his own received him not," John i. 11), was, because they could "see neither form, nor comeliness, nor beauty in him, why he should be desired," Isa. liii. 2. None can or will abide constant in his doctrine who is not able spiritually to discern the glory of his person and offices. Hence the apostles lay it down as the foundation of their faith, that "they beheld his glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth," John i. 14; and that which they had in themselves they endeavoured to communicate unto others, that they also might believe through their word, and have fellowship with him, 1 John i. 3. So he himself makes this the foundation of his church, the rock upon which he will build it; for on the confession of Peter that he was "the Christ, the Son of the living God" (which expresseth the glory both of his person as the Son of the living God, and of his offices as the Christ), he says, "On this rock will I build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it," Matt. xvi. 16–18. Whosoever builds not hereon builds on the sand, and will be prevailed against. So our apostle declares that those that hold him not as the Head will be beguiled, and vainly puffed up by their fleshly minds, falling into foolish errors and vain curiosities, Col. ii. 18, 19. And he rests the whole foundation of all gospel faith in this glory of his person and offices, Heb. i. 2, 3; Col. i. 15–19. It is this knowledge of him alone that will make us disesteem and despise all other things in comparison of him, Phil. iii. 8–10.

Wherefore, a spiritual view of him, an acquaintance with him, as "the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person," as him in whom all the perfections of the divine nature, as wisdom, goodness, and grace, do centre, as to their manifestation, even in the union of his natures, the glory of his offices, the suitableness of his person and grace unto all the wants and desires of the souls of men, is indispensably necessary unto our preservation from apostasy. And I could easily manifest by particular instances that a failing herein hath had a principal and prevalent influence into all the apostasies that have been in the Christian world, both as unto faith and worship. It is, though a new, yet a most wicked attempt that Satan is making by some against the whole of our religion; whilst allowing his person to be what it is (which for secular ends they dare not deny), they endeavour to render him of little or no use in our profession. This is to "fight neither against small nor great, but against the King of Israel;" and if such serpentine attempts be not prevented, the public profession of religion among us will issue in atheism, or somewhat of a near alliance thereunto.

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Thus it seems to be with some of them of whom we speak. They had, among other notional professors, an historical knowledge of Christ, and thereof made profession, but they were never spiritually acquainted with the glorious excellencies of his person and offices; for if they had, they would not have forsaken the "great mystery of godliness, God manifested in the flesh," for other uncouth notions of their own. Who can think it possible that any one who hath known the Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, the Son of God incarnate, receiving our nature into a hypostatical union with himself and a blessed subsistence in his own person, as proposed unto us in the gospel, as evidently therein crucified before our eyes, as the apostle and high priest of our profession, as our advocate with the Father, as making peace for us and reconciliation through the blood of his cross, as made of God unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption;—who that ever had experience or benefit, in his temptations and trials, of his love, care, tenderness, compassion, readiness and ability to succour them that come to God by him,—can renounce all these things, to betake himself to vain notions of a light and perfection of his own in their stead? I hope they are few who do so *practically*, but the expressions of many have a dangerous aspect that way; and it is certain there is nothing more necessary unto all that are called Christians than to have clear, distinct notions in themselves of the person of Christ, and plainly to declare how they place their whole faith, hope, and trust in him. And for such as really do so, though not able to express themselves in a due manner, yea, though unduly captivated unto some novel conceptions and expressions, the good Lord pardon them, and let mercy and peace be on them, and on the whole Israel of God! Whereas, therefore, some who have made a profession of these things do now relinquish them, I shall pray they may take heed that they do not thereby "crucify the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame." Neither is it a verbal acknowledgment, in owning that Christ which suffered at Jerusalem, which will free any from this charge and guilt. Unless the Lord Christ, that Christ which is God and man in one person, be owned, received, believed in, loved, trusted unto, and obeyed in all things, as he is proposed unto us in the Scripture, and with respect unto all the ends of righteousness, holiness, life, and salvation, for which he is so proposed, he is renounced and forsaken. Who can sufficiently express the cunning sleights of Satan? who can sufficiently bewail the foolishness of the hearts of men, that after they have, at least doctrinally, known and professed these things, they should be turned aside from the glory, truth, and holiness of them? Let Christians therefore know and beware, that if they find any decay in faith, love, delight, and trust

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in the person and mediation of Christ, they are in the way that leads to some cursed apostasy of one kind or another.

But where the divine person of Christ is denied, or all acquaintance with him is despised; where the communication of grace from him unto believers is scorned; where no use by faith of his love, care, compassion, and power, as our high priest and advocate with the Father, in our duties, sins, temptations, and sufferings, is allowed, —we need not represent the danger of falling into apostasy; such persons are already in the depth of it. I speak this with the more earnestness, because, of all the evils which I have seen in the course of my pilgrimage (now hastening unto its period), there hath been none more grievous than the public contempt I have lived to see cast on the person of Christ, as to its concernment in our religion, and the benefits we receive from him. But God taketh care of these things.

Thirdly, *Want of experience of the power and efficacy of the Spirit and grace of Christ,* of his life and death, for the mortification of sin, hath been another spring of this apostasy. How it is wrought by these means, and can be no otherwise accomplished, I have showed elsewhere at large, and must not here assume the same argument again; only, two things may be observed concerning this work and duty: as,—

1. It is that wherein or whereunto *the greatest wisdom and exercise of faith* doth consist, or is required. It is a matter purely evangelical, to derive strength and ability from Christ for the mortification of sin, by virtue of his death, in a way of believing. Unenlightened reason can neither see nor understand any thing of this matter; yea, it is foolishness unto it, as are all other mysteries of the gospel. There is not any other way for the same end which it will not more willingly embrace.

2. It is a work and duty whereunto there is a *great reluctancy in the flesh,* in corrupted nature. There is nothing it had rather be freed from, and that whether we respect the inward nature of it or the constant continuance in it that is required of us. Yet is it such as that without it we can never attain life and salvation; for "if we by the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the flesh, we shall live," and not otherwise. Wherefore, when men once begin to be sensible of the powerful inward workings of sin, they will take one of these two ways, nor can they do otherwise: for either they will yield themselves up "servants unto sin," and make "provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof," according as they are able, and as far as consists with their secular interest, as do the most; or they will betake themselves to some way or other for its restraint and mortification, either in part or in whole. And here many things will present themselves

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unto such persons, some, it may be, of their own devising, and some of God's appointment, but for other ends than what they apply them unto. Hence multitudes faint in this work, and at length utterly give it over. They begin in the Spirit and end in the flesh; for, not striving lawfully nor in the right way, sin gets ground and strength against them, and they yield up themselves to the service of it. Hence have we so many who, having under their convictions contended against their lusts in their youth, do give up themselves unto them in their age. But so it is in this matter, that those who, through their unbelief, cannot rise or attain unto an experience of the power and efficacy of the grace of Christ for the mortification of sin will betake themselves to somewhat else for their relief; and this is that principally which hath brought forth that light within among some, which must do all this work for them, and much more. If any will betake themselves thereunto, they shall find that remedy against sin, and that perfection of holiness, in a few days, which they had been looking for from Christ a long season to no purpose. So would they have us to think who, it may be, never had experience what it is to derive spiritual strength from Christ, or to wait on him for it; only they have been wearied by the successlessness of their convictions, and the burdensomeness of lifeless duties. For some of them were for a season not only sober in their conversation (which I hope they yet continue to be), but diligent in duties of religion; but finding neither life, power, nor success in them, through their own uncured unbelief, they seem to have grown weary of them: for nothing is more grievous than the outward form of spiritual duties where there is no experience of inward power and sweetness. Wherefore, the corrupt minds of men will be ready to relinquish them for any thing that pretends a better relief.

What was the reason that so many in the Papacy betook themselves to penances, severe disciplines, and self-macerations, for the relief of their consciences with respect unto the mortification of sin? It all sprang from this root, or ignorance of the power and efficacy of the Spirit and grace of Christ for that end. Somewhat must be done unto this purpose, and not knowing the right way and gospel method of it, they betook themselves unto what they could invent, or what was imposed on them by the superstition of others, that pretended to afford them a relief. Somewhat hereof those among us seemed for a while to make an appearance of, in an outward gravity and seeming austerity of life; but the things themselves they had no mind unto, as not compliant with other interests they had to pursue. But the light within shall do all of this kind for them; wherefore, in comparison thereof, and as unto this end at least, they reject the Lord Christ, and do what in them lies to "put him to

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an open shame;" for what do they less who declare that that is done in a few days for them by another means which could not be effected by the faith which for so long a season they professed in him? But the cause of the whole lies solely in their own ignorance and want of experience of the things which themselves professed.

Fourthly, *Ignorance of the righteousness of God* hath been another spring of this apostasy. This the apostle expressly declares to be the reason why men go about to establish a righteousness of their own: Rom. x. 3, "Being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, they have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God." And this he speaks of the Jews, and that the best of them, who "followed after the law of righteousness, but sought it as it were by the works of the law," Rom. ix. 31, 32. Of all men they thought themselves most knowing of the "righteousness of God;" for they "made their boast of God, and knew" (as they thought and professed) "his will, and approved the things that are more excellent, being instructed out of the law, and were confident that they themselves were guides of the blind, and the light of them which are in darkness, instructors of the foolish, and teachers of babes, having the form of knowledge and of the truth in the law," Rom. ii. 17–20. Yet these men submitted not unto the righteousness of God, but went about to establish their own righteousness, because they were ignorant of the righteousness of God. And wheresoever this ignorance is, men will do so.

Take the "righteousness of God" in any sense wherein it is mentioned in the Scripture, and this event will follow upon the ignorance thereof; for it must be either the righteousness that is in him, or the righteousness he requires of us in the law, or the righteousness he hath provided for us in the gospel. Consider it any of these ways, and the ignorance of it is that which countenanceth men in betaking themselves unto a righteousness of their own, yea, unavoidably casteth them upon it; for,—

1. A right understanding of *the infinite purity, the glorious essential holiness*, of the nature of God, of his absolute *eternal righteousness* as the Lord and judge of all, will teach men what apprehensions they ought to have of any thing done in them or by them. "Our God is a consuming fire," Heb. xii. 29; "a God of purer eyes than to behold evil," Hab. i. 13; "who will by no means clear the guilty," Exod. xxxiv. 7; "whose judgment it is, that they which commit sin are worthy of death," Rom. i. 32; "an holy God, a jealous God, who will not forgive transgressions and sins," Josh. xxiv 19. Whilst the dread and terror of the excellency of his holiness and righteousness is before men, they will not easily betake themselves and their trust unto a righteousness of their own. There are two sorts

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of persons that the Scripture represents under an apprehension of this righteousness of God. The first are, convinced, guilty sinners; and the other, humble, holy believers. And what thoughts of themselves each sort is thereon filled withal it doth declare. For the former sort, we have an instance in Adam, Gen. iii. 10; in others, Isa. xxxiii. 14, as also Micah vi. 6, 7. The sum is, they can think of nothing, have no other conceptions in their minds, but how either they may flee from him and hide themselves, or feign to themselves impossible ways of atonement, or be swallowed up in horror and despair. Send them in this condition unto a righteousness of their own, and they will easily understand you do but reproach their misery. And for the other sort, or humble, holy believers, we may see also how on this occasion they express themselves in this matter, Job iv. 17–19, ix. 2; Ps. cxxx. 3, cxliii. 2. They all jointly acknowledge that, such is the glorious holiness and righteousness of God, such the imperfection of our righteousness and impurity of our works, there is no appearance or standing before him on their account. It is the want of a due meditation hereon that hath produced the many presumptuous opinions in the world concerning the justification of sinners. The Scripture, speaking of justification, directs us to conceive it "in God's sight," Ps. cxliii. 2, or "before him," Rom. iii. 20; teaching us that in this matter we should set ourselves as in the presence and under the eye of this holy God, and then consider on what ground we may stand before him. But when men are "ignorant of the righteousness of God," when they have secret thoughts that he is "altogether such an one as themselves," as the psalmist speaks,—that is, one who is either not so holy in himself as is pretended, or one who doth not require a suitableness in us unto his holiness, but is little concerned in our duties, less in our sins,—is it any wonder if men think they can of themselves do that which is satisfactory unto him, and so "go about to establish their own righteousness?" And this way even in teaching have some betaken themselves unto. They endeavour to satisfy their disciples that there is no such severity in God against sin as some pretend, no such holiness in his nature as necessarily to infer an indignation against every sin; that they are but vain frights and needless disquietments which either their own consciences or the preaching of some men do put them unto. And if they can prevail to be credited herein, there is no doubt but that those whom they so persuade will be pleased with their own righteousness: but whether God, in this matter of justification, will be pleased with it or no is not so easy to be determined.

And hence it is that all opinions of a self-righteousness, or justification by works, have always produced licentiousness of life, though

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they who assert it clamorously pretend to the contrary. So when a righteousness of works was absolutely enthroned in the Papacy, before the Reformation, the lives of the generality of men were flagitiously wicked, and most of the good works that were performed amongst them were but barterings with God and conscience for horrible vices and impieties. According, also, unto the growth of the same opinion, in its various degrees, among us, is the progress of all sorts of impiety and licentiousness of life. And if the masters of these opinions would but open their eyes, they would see that whereas they assert their justification by works under a pretence of a necessity so to do, for the maintenance of holiness and righteousness among men, unholiness, unrighteousness, intemperance of life, and all abominations, do grow upon them, such as were not heard of in former days among them who made any profession of religion. And the reason hereof is, because the very same notions of God which will allow men to suppose that they may be justified in his sight by their own duties, will also accommodate their lusts with several apprehensions that he will not be so severe against their sins as is supposed. However, this is plain in matter of fact, that the opinion of self-righteousness and looseness of conversation in the practice of sin have gone together generally, from the days of the Pharisees to this present season. And as this proud conceit receives daily advancement in several degrees, under various pretences, it is to be feared the world will be more and more filled with the bitter fruits thereof. It is grace, and the doctrine of it, as well as its power, that must put a stop to sin. He that drives men into a righteousness of their own at one door opens another unto their sins. And all that we have got hitherto by fierce disputations about justification as it were by works, is only that the faith of some hath been weakened, the peace of multitudes disquieted, differences increased, without the least evidence of holiness improved or the vices of men reformed by them. And it will not be granted that the strictest professors in these days (whether they have imbibed these opinions or no) do in real holiness and fruitfulness of life exceed those of the foregoing age, who firmly, and without hesitation, trusted unto the Lord Christ alone for life, righteousness, and salvation.

2. Suppose *the righteousness God requires of us in the law* to be intended; the ignorance thereof also is a great reason why men venture on a righteousness of their own, and go about to establish it. Were they indeed acquainted with the purity, spirituality, severity, and inexorableness of the law, they would never be possessed with imaginations that the perfection which they dream of in themselves would endure its trial. But when men shall suppose that the law respects only outward duties, and those also of the greatest notoriety,

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as to sin and obedience, and can relieve themselves in sundry things by pharisaical distinctions and expositions of it; when they consider not, or understand not, the extent of it,—unto an exacting of the entire image of God in us, wherein we were created, unto the regulating of all the frames, figments, and first motions of the heart, and its application of the curse unto the least deviation from it,—they may please or some way satisfy themselves by establishing a righteousness of their own, as it were by the works of the law.

3. But the "righteousness of God" in this place is taken principally for that *righteousness which he hath provided for us in the gospel;* and what this is the apostle declares in the next verse: "For," says he, "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness unto every one that believeth," Rom. x. 4. And this he calls "The righteousness which is of faith," chap. ix. 30. Wherefore, the "righteousness of God" is Christ as fulfilling the law and answering the end of it, received by faith. This is that righteousness of God, which whosoever are ignorant of and submit not unto, they will go about to establish a righteousness of their own, and trust unto it. And thus hath it openly and visibly fallen out with them concerning whom we treat. They will not deny but that, under their convictions, they were solicitous after a righteousness with which God might be well pleased; —and if they should deny it, they were not to be believed, because it is impossible it should be otherwise with any in that condition; for conviction is principally a sense of the want of a righteousness. In this state, the gospel which they had, and which it may be they heard preached, presented unto them "Christ as the end of the law for righteousness unto every one that believeth," as it is fully declared, Rom. iii. 21–26, with chap. v. 18, 19. This divers of them for a season professed themselves to embrace and acquiesce in. But when things came to the trial, it generally appeared that they had all along been ignorant of this righteousness of God; for they have left it for a righteousness of their own, which, had they truly and really known it, they could not have done. He who hath ever truly and really made Christ the end of the law for righteousness unto himself, by believing, will not cast contempt and scorn upon his righteousness imputed unto us, as is the manner of some to do. But herein is the Son of God in some measure "crucified afresh, and put to an open shame." When men shall profess that they did look after righteousness by him, and would have received him as the end of the law for righteousness, but not finding that therein which they expected, they have betaken themselves to a righteousness wholly within them, and so wholly their own, they will not easily contrive a way whereby they may reflect more dishonour upon him. Whatever pretences may be made to the contrary, whatever maze

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of words any may lead men into and tire them withal, whatever reviling and reproaching of others they may compass them with, they cannot but know in their own consciences that it is thus with them. Notwithstanding any profession that they ever made, they never did come, nor ever could attain unto, a real knowledge of and acquaintance with this righteousness of God, so as to receive it by faith, and obtain thereby rest unto their souls. And hence it is that, as unto profession at least, they have betaken themselves unto an endeavour to establish their own righteousness; which, if it produce and effect a real holy conversation and righteousness in them of any long continuance, they are the first in whom it ever had that effect in this world, and will be the last in whom it shall find that success.

Fifthly, Want of submission unto the *sovereignty* of God hath contributed unto the furtherance of this evil. The sovereignty of God acting itself in infinite wisdom and grace is the sole foundation of the covenant of grace, and runs through the whole mystery of the gospel. Thence proceedeth the *incarnation* of the Son of God, and his being filled with all grace to be a Saviour, John iii. 16; Col. i. 19; John i. 16. Other account thereof none can be given. Thence was his substitution as the surety of the covenant in our stead, to undergo the punishment due to our sins, Isa. liii. 6, 10; 2 Cor. v. 21. Eternal *election* flows from thence, and is regulated thereby, Rom. ix. 11, 18; so doth effectual *vocation*, Matt. xi. 25, 26, and *justification* by faith, Rom. iii. 30. The like may be said of all other mysteries of the gospel. Love, grace, goodness, dispensed in a way of sovereign, unaccountable pleasure, are in them all proposed as the objects of our faith. The carnal mind is pleased with nothing of all this, but riseth up in opposition unto every instance of it. It will not bear that the will, wisdom, and pleasure of God should be submitted unto and adored in the paths which it cannot trace. Hence the incarnation and cross of the Son of God are foolishness unto it, 1 Cor. i. 23–25; the decrees of God as to election and reprobation unjust and unequal, overthrowing all religion, Rom. ix. 17–21; justification through the imputation of the righteousness of Christ that which everts the law, and renders all our own righteousness unnecessary. So in the whole mystery, in all the doctrines, precepts, or promises of the gospel, that spring from or are resolved into the sovereignty of God,—the carnal mind riseth up in opposition unto them all; for whereas the formal nature of faith consisteth in giving glory to God by believing the things that are above reason as it is ours, and against it as it is carnal, Rom. iv. 18–21, this sets up an enmity unto it in all things. It is therefore always tumultuating against the mysteries of the gospel; and if it once come to make

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itself the judge of them, taking aid from sensual affections and the vain imaginations of the mind, it will make havoc of all the articles of faith. And thus it seems to have fallen out in this matter. Those concerning whom we treat seem to have cast off a due regard unto the sovereignty of God, because themselves were never bowed by faith savingly thereto. Wherefore, in an opposition unto it, they have set up their light within, as the rule, measure, and judge, of the truths and doctrines of the gospel. Instead of becoming fools, by a resignation of their reason and wisdom to the sovereignty of God, that so they might in the issue be really wise, they have become wise in their own conceit, and have waxed vain in their foolish imaginations. Neither, indeed, is there any broader way of apostasy from the gospel than a rejection of God's sovereignty in all things concerning the revelation of himself and our obedience, with a refusal to "bring into captivity every thought unto the obedience of faith;" which first brought forth Pelagianism, and of late Socinianism, as hath been showed, from which two the whole of the present defection is derived.

Sixthly, We may add hereunto, as another spring of this partial apostasy, *want of an evidence in themselves of the divine authority of the Scriptures.* It is not enough, to establish any man in the profession of the gospel, to own in general that the Scripture is the word of God, or a divine revelation of his will. He that hath not an experience of a divine authority in it upon his own soul and conscience will not be steadfast when his trial shall come. God looks with regard unto them alone who tremble at his word, as owning his present authority in it. Where this doth not abide upon them, "unlearned and unstable men," as the apostle speaks, will be bold to "wrest the Scriptures, to their destruction," or to prefer other things before them, or at least to equalize them with them. It is not, therefore, enough that we assent unto the truth of the word of God, unless also we are sensible of its power, and of that claim which it makes in the name of God to the absolute subjection of our whole souls and consciences unto it. Now, this evidence in themselves of this present divine authority, differing it unconceivably from all other real or pretended conveyances of truth, these persons either never had or have insensibly lost, or cast off openly the yoke of God therein. Hereon every imagination of their own exalts itself into an equality of right and authority with it. The end of these things is, that God gives men up to "strong delusion, to believe a lie," because they "received not," or retained not, "the truth in the love thereof," 2 Thess. ii 10, 11. And when once it comes unto this, it is the work of Satan (which he easily accomplisheth) both to suggest unto them endless delusions, and to render them so obstinate therein

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as that they shall despise every thing that is tendered unto conviction.

This is the FIRST way whereby men fall away from the gospel,—namely, from the mystery and doctrine of it as it is the object of our faith; wherein they do what in them lies "to crucify the Son of God afresh, and to put him to an open shame."

CHAPTER VIII.

Apostasy from the holiness of the gospel; the occasion and cause of it—Of that which is gradual, on the pretence of somewhat else in its room.

THERE is, SECONDLY, a *falling away from the gospel with respect unto the holiness of its precepts,* which are to be the *matter,* as they are the *rule,* of our obedience. And this also is of a nature no less perilous, and attended with consequents and effects no less dangerous, than the former, and doth no less than that expose the Son of God to open shame: yea, an apostasy from the holiness of the gospel is, on many accounts, more dreadful and dangerous than a partial apostasy from its truth; for as it is more spreading and catholic than that is, and of less observation or esteem, so it is usually more irrecoverable, most men under it being greatly hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. Besides, commonness hath taken off the sense of its evil and danger. If there be an error broached against the doctrine of the gospel, it is odds but some or other will take notice of it, confute it, and warn all men of the danger wherewith it is attended; but let the whole world, as it were, lie in evil, let the generality of mankind drown themselves in lusts and pleasures, let the lives and conversations of men be as contrary to the rule of the gospel as darkness is to light, so they make no disorder in this or that way of outward worship, and be either good Catholics or good Protestants, or any thing else of that kind, he shall scarcely escape the censure of peevishness and severity (it may be of self-conceitedness and hypocrisy) who shall reflect any great blame on these things. And yet, notwithstanding this partiality in judgment or practice with respect unto these evils, it is generally acknowledged that it is possible that men may please God and be accepted with him, notwithstanding many mistakes, errors, and misconceptions of their minds about spiritual things: but that any one should ever come unto the enjoyment of him who lives and dies impenitently in any sin, against the rule and tenor of that holiness which the gospel requireth, I know as yet none that pleadeth; for, once to pretend that men may live in, and habitually act any known sin, without striving

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against it, labouring for repentance, and endeavouring its mortification, is all one as avowedly to attempt the overthrow of Christian religion. Wherefore, on these and sundry other considerations, this latter sort of apostasy from the holiness of the gospel is at least as perilous, as much to be opposed and contended against, as that which is from the mystery and doctrine of it, and that whereof the generality of men are more earnestly to be warned, as the evil whereunto they are more obnoxious than to the other. And we do conjoin both these together, not only as those which are of the same tendency, and do alike both ruin the souls of men and put the Lord Christ to open shame, but also as those concerning which we are forewarned that they shall enter and come into the world together in the "latter times." And whatever sense the "latter times" mentioned in the Scripture may be taken in, either those of the world and of religion in general, or of the particular churches whereunto men may belong, they are unquestionably come upon us; whose danger and duty, therefore, are declared in these pre-admonitions. Wherefore of the first our apostle speaketh, 1 Tim. iv. 1, "The Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils." I doubt not but this prediction had its signal accomplishment in the Papacy, and am well persuaded that the Holy Ghost had respect in particular unto those principles and practices which a learned person of this nation hath laid open, under the title of "The Apostasy of the Latter Times."[1] But we find also, by woful experience, and that renewed almost every day, that it hath respect unto us also and the times wherein we live.

The entrance and coming of that kind of apostasy which we have now designed to treat of is in like manner foretold, 2 Tim. iii. 1–5. The sum of what the apostle there instructeth us is, That in these "latter times," *under an outward profession of the gospel*, men should give up themselves unto the pursuit of the *vilest lusts* and the practice of the *most abominable sins*. And we fear this prediction is in like manner fulfilled.

Now, although these things are evil and dangerous, both in their own nature and tendency, especially as they come together and make their joint attempt against the honour of Christ and the salvation of the professors of the gospel, yet this prediction of them and pre-admonition concerning them may be of advantage unto them that are sincere and upright, if duly improved. For,—

1. If this twofold ruinous apostasy will and doth press upon us,

[1] Owen refers to a work by the learned Joseph Mede, entitled, "The Apostasy of the Latter Times; or, the Gentiles' Theology of Demons Revived in the Invocation of Saints, Adoring of Relics," etc. It was published in 1642. An edition of it appeared so recently as 1836.—Ed.

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on whom the ends of the world are come, we ought surely to *stand upon our guard*, that we be not surprised with it nor overcome by it. How ought we to "pass the time of our sojourning here in fear!" It was the advice of him whose confidence had like to have been his ruin. It is assuredly no time for any to be careless and secure who design, or so much as desire, to be preserved from this fatal evil. However, we cannot any of us plead that we were not warned of our danger, nor called on for that circumspection and watchfulness, that care and diligence, that earnestness for divine help and assistance, which our condition requireth, and which will be a means of deliverance and safety. And,—

2. Being found in the way of our own *duty*, we need not be greatly moved or "shaken in our minds" when we see these things come to pass. It may be a prospect of the state of religion at this day in the world is ready to terrify the minds of some, at least to fill them with amazement; for if things should always so proceed, they may be afraid lest Christian religion should at length lose all its beauty and glory. But these things are all of them punctually foretold, whereby the efficacy of the temptation from their coming to pass is prevented. Yea, considering that all our faith is resolved into the Scripture, and built on the infallibility of its prophecies and predictions, seeing they are foretold, the temptation would be accompanied with more vigour and efficacy if we saw them not come to pass than it is now we do, seeing it is evident from other circumstances that we are fallen into the "latter times," which the accomplishment of these predictions renders unquestionable. See Matt. xxiv. 9–13, 24; Acts xx. 29, 30; 2 Thess. ii. 3; 1 Tim. iv. 1–3; 2 Tim. iii. 1–5. And the truth is, there was never any persuasion more pernicious befell the minds of men, than that churches, this or that church, or any church, are not, or is not liable or obnoxious unto these decays, declensions, and apostasies, or that any in them or of them can be preserved from them without the utmost care and diligence in attending unto the means appointed for their preservation. When the Jews fell into such a foolish confidence with respect unto their temple and worship, God was wont to bid them go to Shiloh and see what was become thereof, as assuring them that what fell out in one time and place might do so in another. And we know how it was in this matter with the first Christian churches, and how soon (as hath been declared), Rev. ii. 4, 5, iii. 1–3, 14–17. We may go to them and learn how vain are all the pretences of outward privileges and exemptions; for assuredly, "unless we repent, we shall all likewise perish."

That, therefore, which we shall now inquire into is, the *nature*, the *causes*, and *occasions*, of that apostasy or falling off from the *holi-*

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ness of the gospel, in churches and by particular persons, which is thus foretold to fall out in the "latter times," and hath done so accordingly. And we shall have respect herein both unto that general apostasy of this kind which fell out in former ages under the conduct of the Roman church principally, and that also which, by various ways and means, is at present prevailing in the world. And some things must be premised unto our consideration hereof:—

1. The doctrine of the gospel is *a doctrine of holiness*. This it teacheth, requireth, and commandeth; this the mysteries and grace of it lead unto; this the precepts of it require; and this the great example of its Author, proposed in it unto us, doth enjoin. And it doth not this as that which is convenient for us, or some way or other necessary unto us, but as that without which we can have no interest in any of its promises. No unholy person hath any ground to expect the least advantage by the gospel, here or hereafter. When all things come to their issue, and shall fall under eternal judgment according to the gospel, all other pleas and pretences will utterly and for ever fail them who are "workers of iniquity," Matt. vii. 22, 23.

2. The *holiness* which the gospel requireth is an obedience of *another nature and kind* than what is required by any other doctrine or way of instruction. The law of nature continueth to suggest unto us many important duties towards God, ourselves, and other men; the written law is an exact representation of all those moral duties which were required of us in the state wherein we were created;—but there is a holiness required by the gospel, which, although it include these things within the compass of its law and order, yet (on sundry considerations) is of another kind than what is required by those laws, in the manner wherein it is required in them; for it proceedeth from other principles, on another formal reason and motives, hath other essential properties, acts, duties, and ends, than the obedience by them required hath. This hath been so fully evinced in our discourse of the nature and necessity of gospel holiness[1] that it need not be here again insisted on.

3. Together with the light and doctrine of the gospel, or the preaching of it, *there is an administration of the Spirit, to convince men of sin, righteousness, and judgment*. This God hath promised, Isa. lix. 21, and this the Lord Christ doth effect wherever the word is orderly dispensed according unto his mind and will, John xvi. 7–11. Hereby are men wrought upon unto a profession of this holiness, and expression of it in outward duties; for all that religion which hath any thing of truth and reality in it in the world is an effect of the word and Spirit of Christ. Multitudes in all ages have hereby been made really holy, and many yet continue so to be.

[1] See vol. iii. books iv. and v.—Ed.

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These (as we believe) shall never fall utterly from it, but shall be preserved by the power of God through faith unto salvation. But yet such as these also may decay as unto degrees in holiness and the fruitfulness of it; and in every such decay there is a partial apostasy and much dishonour unto Jesus Christ; nor doth any man know in that condition but that in the issue, as to his particular, it may be total, and destructive to his soul. Thus was it with those churches and persons whom our Lord Jesus Christ chargeth to have lost their first faith and love, whom he admonisheth to remember whence they are fallen, and to repent. And it is principally for the sake of these, that Christ and the gospel be not dishonoured by them nor their eternal concernments hazarded, and those who, in the use of means, are in a thriving progress towards the same condition, that the ensuing cautions and warnings are prepared. And others there are who are brought only unto a profession of this holiness in inward convictions and outward duties; and although they are not yet arrived unto a full possession of its power and conformity unto its rule, yet are they in the way of attaining thereunto. Such as these may, on various occasions, first decay in their profession and duties, and afterward utterly fall from them into the open service of sin and the world.

Thus also it is with churches. At their first planting, they were set in a pure and holy state as to the doctrine, professed holiness, and worship of the gospel. They were all planted noble vines, wholly of a right seed, however they turn afterwards "into the degenerate plant of a strange vine." They may lose of this order and beauty, part with truth, decay in holiness, and the faithful city thereby become a harlot. How this hath come to pass; how thereby Christianity hath lost its glory, power, and efficacy in the world; how that blessing which it brought along with it unto the nations is lost and forfeited, and by what means,—shall in some principal instances be declared.

4. Where this holiness is professed, and the power of it evidenced in its fruits, there, and then *alone, is Christ glorified* and honoured in the world. It is true, there are other things that belong unto that revenue of glory which our Lord and King requireth of us,—such are the profession of the truth and observance of the worship of the gospel,—but if these things are disjoined and separated (as they may be) from holy obedience, they no way advance the glory of Christ. But where churches and persons professing the gospel are changed and renewed into the image of God; where their hearts are purified within, and their lives made fruitful without; where they are universally under the conduct of a spirit of peace, love, meekness, benignity, self-denial, heavenly-mindedness, and are fruitful in

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good works,—in which things and others of an alike nature this holiness doth consist,—there do they make a due representation of the gospel and its Author in the world; then do they evidence the power, purity, and efficacy of his doctrine and grace, whereby he is glorified. Herein doth he "see of the travail of his soul and is satisfied;" this is "his portion and the lot of his inheritance" in this world. But where it is otherwise, where men, where churches, are called by his name, and, under a profession of his authority and expectation of mercy and eternal blessedness from him, do come short of this holiness, and walk in paths contrary unto it, there is the holy Son of God "crucified afresh, and put to an open shame."

These things being premised, way is made for the due consideration of what was before proposed; for whereas there is an open, shameful, manifest apostasy from the holiness of the gospel among the most who are called Christians at this day in the world, it is worth our while to inquire a little into the reasons or causes of it, and the means whereby a stop may be put unto it, or at least particular persons may be preserved from the guilt of it, and the judgments wherein it will issue. If any shall think that there is not such an apostasy in the world, but that the face of things in Europe and among ourselves doth make a due representation of the gospel, and that those things which we hear of and see continually amongst the generality of Christians are the true and genuine effects of the doctrine and principles of our religion, I shall no way contend with them, so as that they will but a little stand out of our way, and not hinder us in our progress.

Now, the apostasy that is in the world from gospel holiness, or evangelical obedience, is of two kinds; for some fall from it as *formally such*, and others as to the *matter* of it. Of the first sort are they who would advance another kind of obedience, a course of another sort of duties, or the same as to the substance of them, but as proceeding from other principles and carried on by other motives than what it requireth, in the stead thereof. Thus it is with many in the world. They pretend unto a strictness in some duties, and a multiplication of others, at least unto a great appearance thereof; but it is hard for any one to discover how that which they do belongeth to evangelical holiness, if its nature depend on evangelical principles and ends. Others fall from it openly and visibly, into a sinful, worldly, flagitious course of life. This is that apostasy which the Christian world groans under at this day, and which, as it is to be feared, will bring the judgments of God upon it. The very profession of piety is much lost, yea, much derided, amongst many. Duties of holiness, strictness of conversation, communication unto edification, are not only neglected, but scorned. It is in many places

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a lost labour to seek for Christianity among Christians; and the degeneracy seems to be increasing every day. It is the latter of these which I principally intend, as that which is of most universal concernment. But the former also, though under many specious pretences, being of no less pernicious event unto many, must not be wholly passed by. I shall therefore first give some instances of men's declension from the holy ways of gospel obedience into paths of pretended duties of their own finding out, and add those reasons of their dislike of the good old way which give them occasion so to do.

I. The first and most signal instance of this kind is given us by the Romanists. None boast more than they of holiness,—that is, of their church, making its sanctity a note of its truth. But because the wicked and flagitious lives, not only of the body of the people among them, but of many of their chief rulers and guides, is openly manifest, in the defence of their confident claim, as that alone which will give countenance unto it, they betake themselves unto their votaries, or those who dedicate themselves by vow unto more strict exercises in religion than others attain or are obliged unto; and this sort of people have obtained alone the name and reputation of *Religious* among them. What is their way and manner of life, what the devotion wherein they spend their hours, what the duties they oblige themselves unto in great variety, and the manner wherein they perform them, I shall take for granted, and pass by as generally known. Many have already discovered the vanity, superstition, and hypocrisy, of the whole outward course wherein they are generally engaged; though they neither do nor ought to judge of the hearts, minds, and state of individuals, unless where by their deeds they manifest themselves. I shall only evince that what at best they pretend unto (though boasted of not only to be all, but more than God requireth of them) is not that holiness or obedience which is prescribed unto us in the gospel, but somewhat substituted in the room of it, and, consequently, in opposition unto it. And,—

1. It hath not *that evidence of spiritual freedom and liberty* which gospel holiness, in all the duties of it, is accompanied withal. The first effect of the truth upon our minds is to "make us free," John viii. 32. It is the principle of all holiness, and enlargeth the mind and spirit unto it, whence it is called "The holiness of truth," Eph. iv. 24. So, "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty," 2 Cor. iii. 17. Men are naturally the "servants of sin," willingly giving up themselves unto the fulfilling of its lusts and commands, and are only "free from righteousness." But where the Holy Spirit worketh with the word of truth, men are made "free from sin, and become servants to God, having their fruit unto holiness," Rom. vi. 20, 22. So it is said of all believers that they "have not received the spirit

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of bondage again to fear, but the Spirit of adoption, whereby they cry, 'Abba, Father,' Rom. viii. 15; not "the spirit of fear, but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind," 2 Tim. i. 7. The meaning of all these and the like testimonies is, that God by his grace enlargeth, makes free and ready, the hearts of believers unto all gospel obedience, so as that they shall walk in it, and perform all the duties of it, willingly, cheerfully, freely, without that fear and dread which is an effect of the power of the law. They are not in a scrupulous bondage unto outward duties and the manner of their performance, but do all things with delight and freedom. They have by the Spirit of adoption, as the reverential fear of children, so their gracious inclination unto obedience. But in that exercise of devotion, and multiplied outward duties of religion, which the Romanists boast of as their especial sanctity, there are great evidences of a servile bondage or slavish frame of spirit; for they are forced to bind themselves, and to be bound unto it, by especial vows, in whose observation they no more act as their own guardians, or as those who are "sui juris," but are under the coercive discipline of others, and outward punishment in case of failure. And those who are so servants of men in religious duties are not God's freemen, nor have they Christ for their Lord in that case who have another. The foundation of all these duties, and which alone obligeth them unto their performance, are vows nowhere required by God or our Lord Christ in the gospel; and the principal regard which any have in their strict attendance unto them is the obedience which they owe unto the superintendents of those vows. It is easy to apprehend how inconsistent this way is with that spiritual freedom and liberty of mind which inseparably accompanieth true gospel holiness. Besides, the opinion of merit, which not only goeth along with them, but also animates them in all these services, makes them servile in all they do; for they cannot but know that every thing in merit must not only be tried by the touchstone of sincerity, but weighed in the balance to the utmost scruple, to find out what it amounts or comes unto. And this is perfectly destructive of that liberty in obedience which the gospel requireth. So also is that tormenting persuasion which they are under the power of,—namely, *That they have no grounds of confidence or assurance that either they are accepted with God here, or shall come to the blessed enjoyment of him hereafter.* Hence, in all duties, they must of necessity be acted with a "spirit of fear," and not "of power and of a sound mind."

2. The rule of their duties and obedience, as to what is, in their own judgment, eminent therein, is not the *gospel*, but a *system of peculiar laws and rules* that they have framed for themselves. So some obey the rule of Benedict, some of Francis, some of Domi-

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nic, some of Ignatius, and the like. This utterly casts out their whole endeavour from any interest in gospel holiness; for the formal nature of that consists herein, that it is a conformity unto the rule of the gospel as such, or a compliance with the will of God as manifested therein. Hence do they multiply unrequired duties, yea, the principal parts of their devotion and sanctity consist in them which are of their own devising, for which they have no gospel precept or command; and such, in particular, are those vows which are the foundation of all that they do. In this case, our Saviour, reproving the Pharisees for their additional duties beyond the prescript of the word, shows them how they "made the commandment of God of none effect by their tradition," and that "in vain they worshipped God, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men," Matt. xv. 6, 9. And when they were offended at his rejection of one of their new imposed duties, he replies that "every plant which his heavenly Father hath not planted should be rooted up," verse 13; so wholly rejecting all those religious duties which they had framed by rules of their own devising. Nor are these of the Roman devotionists of any better constitution; they are plants of men's own planting, and shall be rooted up accordingly and cast into the fire. Let the number of false invented duties of religion be never so great, let the manner of their performance be never so exact or severe, they serve to no other end but to divert the minds of men from the obedience which the gospel requireth.

3. There is nothing in all that is *prescribed* by the *masters* of this devotion, or *practised* by the *disciples*, but it may all be done and observed without either *faith* in Christ or a sense of his *love* unto our souls. The obedience of the gospel is the "obedience of faith;" on that and no other root will it grow;—and the principal motive unto it is the "love of Christ," which "constraineth" unto it. But what is there in all their prescriptions that these things are necessary unto? May not men rise at midnight to repeat a number of prayers, or go barefoot, or wear sackcloth, or abstain from flesh at certain times or always, or submit to discipline from themselves or others, and (if they have bodily strength to enable them) undergo all the horrid, and indeed ridiculous, hardships of standing on a pillar continually, or bearing great logs of wood on their shoulders all the day long, that are told or fabled of the Egyptian monks, without the least dram of saving faith or love? All false religions have ever had some amongst them who have had an ambition to amuse others with these self-inflictions and macerations, wherein the devotions among the Banians do exceed at this day whatever the Romanists pretend unto.

4. The whole of what they do is so vitiated and *corrupted*

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with the proud opinion of merit and supererogation as renders it utterly foreign unto the gospel. It is not my present business to dispute against these opinions. It hath been already abundantly manifested (and may be yet so again where it is necessary) that they wholly enervate the covenant of grace, are injurious to the blood and mediation of Christ, and are utterly inconsistent with the fundamental principles of the gospel. Whereas, therefore, these proud imaginations do animate their whole course of duties, the gospel is not concerned in what they do.

And we may add unto what hath been remarked already, the consideration of that gross superstition, yea, and idolatry, which they give up themselves unto almost in most of their devotions. This is not the least of their transgressions in these things, but is sufficient to violate all they do besides.

Wherefore, notwithstanding their pretence unto sanctity and a more strict attendance unto duties of obedience than other men, yet it is manifest that the best of them are under a defection from the holiness of the gospel, substituting an obedience unto their own imaginations in the room thereof.

II. Again; others confine the *whole* of their obedience unto *morality*, and deride whatever is pleaded as above it and beyond it, under the name of evangelical grace, as "enthusiastical folly." And the truth is, if those persons who plead for the necessity of gospel grace and holiness, which is more than so, do understand each other, and if somewhat of the same things are not intended by them under different expressions and diverse methods of their management, they are not of the same religion. But if they mistake the meaning of each other, and differ only in the manner of teaching the same truth, I suppose they steer the safest course, and are freest from just offence, who follow and comply with the manner wherein the things intended are taught in the Scripture, rather than those who accommodate their discourses unto the phraseology of heathen philosophers. But the truth is, the difference seems to be real, and the principles men proceed upon in these things are contradictory to each other; for some do plainly affirm that the whole of gospel obedience consists in the observance of moral virtue, which they so describe as to render it exclusive of evangelical grace. This others judge to contain an open declension from and waiving of gospel holiness. It is granted freely, that the performance of all moral duties evangelically,—that is, in the power of the grace of Christ, unto the glory of God by him,—is an essential part of gospel obedience. And whoever they are who (under the pretence of grace or any thing else) do neglect the improvement of moral virtues, or the observance of the duties of morality, they are so far disobedient unto the gospel and

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the law thereof. And some men do not understand how contemptible they render themselves in the management of their cause, when they charge others with an opposition unto morality or moral virtue, and setting up they know not what imaginary holiness in the room thereof; for those whom they so calumniate are not only immediately discharged from any sense of guilt herein by the testimony of their own consciences, but all other men, so far as the rule of ingenuity is extended, do, from the knowledge of their doctrine and observation of their practice, avouch their innocence.

"But is it not so, then, that men do condemn morality, as that which is not to be trusted unto, but will deceive them that rest in or upon it?" I answer, They do so when it is made (as it is by some) the whole of religion, and as it is obtruded into the place of evangelical grace and holiness by others. They take moral virtue, as it always was taken until of late, for natural honesty, or such a conformity of life unto the light of nature as to be useful and approved among men. But this may be,—men may do what is morally good, and yet never do any thing that is accepted with God; for they may do it, but not for the love of God above all, but for the love of self. And therefore they charge morality with an insufficiency unto the end of religion, or the saving of the souls of men,—

1. Where nothing is intended by it but that whereof the rule and measure is *the light of nature:* for that doth direct unto every duty that is properly *moral;* and what it doth not direct unto, what is not naturally by the law of our creation obligatory unto all mankind, cannot be called moral. Now, to confine all religion, as to the preceptive and obediential part of it, unto the light of nature, is to evacuate one half of the gospel.

2. Where it is in practice an effect of *conviction* only, and performed in the innate strength of the rational faculties of our souls, *without the especial supernatural aid of the Spirit and grace of God.* Whatever name any thing may be called by that is not wrought *in* us by the grace of God, as well as *by* us in a way of duty, is foreign unto evangelical obedience. And those who reject morality as insufficient unto acceptation with God and eternal salvation, intend only what is of that kind performed in the power of our natural faculties externally excited and directed, without any supernatural influence or operation of especial grace; and, indeed, so to place a confidence in such duties is open Pelagianism.

3. Where it proceedeth not from *the spiritual, supernatural renovation* of our souls. The rule and method of the gospel is, that the tree be first made good, and then the fruit will be so also. Unless a person be first regenerate, and his nature therein renewed into the image and likeness of God,—unless he be endued with a new

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principle of spiritual life from above, enabling him to live unto God, he can do nothing, of whatsoever sort it be, that is absolutely acceptable unto God. And it is especially under this consideration that any reject morality as not comprehensive of gospel obedience, yea, as that which is apt to draw off the mind from it, and which will deceive them that trust to it,—namely, that it proceedeth not from the principle of grace in a renewed soul; for whatever doth so, though it may be originally of a moral nature in itself, yet from the manner of its performance it becomes gracious and evangelical. And we need not fear to exclude the best works of unrenewed persons from being any part of gospel holiness or obedience.

4. Where those in whom it is, or who pretend unto it, are really destitute of the *internal light of saving grace*, enabling them to discern spiritual things in a spiritual manner, and to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God. That there is such a saving light wrought in the minds of believers by the Holy Ghost, that without it men cannot discern spiritual things, so as to favour, like, and approve of them, hath been elsewhere at large demonstrated. But this belongs not unto the morality contended about. It is not only independent of it, but is indeed set up in competition with it and opposition unto it. No man need fear to judge and censure that morality, as unto its interest in gospel obedience and sufficiency unto the salvation of the souls of men, which may be obtained, practised, and lived up unto, where God doth not "shine in the hearts of men, to give them the light of the knowledge of his glory in the face of Jesus Christ;" where no work of spiritual illumination hath been in their minds, enabling them to discern and know the mind of God, which none knoweth originally but the Spirit of God, by whom it is made [known] unto us, 1 Cor. ii. 11, 12. Yet this is that which some men seem to take up withal and rest in, unto the rejection of evangelical obedience.

Lastly, The same censure is to be passed on it wherever it is separable from those fundamental gospel graces which, both in their nature, acts, and objects, are purely *supernatural*, having no principle, rule, or measure, but *truth supernaturally revealed*. Such, in particular, is the whole regard we have unto the mediation of Christ as also unto the dispensation of the Spirit, promised to abide with the church for ever as its comforter, with all the duties of obedience which depend thereon. He is ignorant of the gospel that knows not that in these things do lie the fundamental principles of its doctrine and precepts, and that in the exercise of those graces in a way of duty which immediately concern them, consist the principal part of the life of God, or of that obedience unto him by Jesus Christ which is indispensably required of all that shall be saved. Whereas

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therefore, these things cannot be esteemed merely moral virtues, nor do at all belong unto, but are considered as separate from, all that morality which is judged insufficient unto life and salvation, it is evident that it is not in the least dealt withal too severely, nor censured more harshly than it doth deserve. If, therefore, any betake themselves hereunto as to the whole of their duty, it comes under the account of that partial defection from the gospel which we inquire into.

III. Some there are who, as unto themselves, pretend they have attained unto *perfection* already in this world; such a perfection in all degrees of holiness as the gospel is but an introduction towards. But this proud imagination, destructive of the covenant of grace, of all use of the mediation and blood of Christ, contrary to innumerable testimonies of Scripture and the experience of all that do believe, and concerning which their own consciences do reprove the pretenders unto it, needs not detain us in its examination. It is sufficient unto our present design to have given these instances how men may, in a pretended conscientious discharge of many duties of obedience, yet fall off and decline from that which the gospel requireth. The occasions and reasons hereof (supposing those more general before considered with respect unto the truth of the gospel, which all of them take place here, and have their influence upon their dislike of its holiness) may be briefly inquired into and represented; nor shall we confine ourselves unto the instances given, but take in the consideration of every declension from it which on any account befalls them who, having had a conviction of its necessity, yet refuse to come unto its universal practice. And to this end we may observe,—

1. That the holiness which the gospel requireth will not be kept up or maintained, either in the hearts or lives of men, without a *continual conflict*, warring, contending; and that with all care, diligence, watchfulness, and perseverance therein. It is our warfare, and the Scripture abounds in the discovery of the adversaries we have to conflict withal, their power and subtlety, as also in directions and encouragements unto their resistance. To suppose that gospel obedience will be maintained in our hearts and lives without a continual management of a vigorous warfare against its enemies, is to deny the Scripture and the experience of all that do believe and obey God in sincerity. Satan, sin, and the world, are continually assaulting of it, and seeking to ruin its interest in us. The devil will not be resisted (which it is our duty to do, 1 Pet. v. 8, 9) without a sharp contest and conflict; in the management whereof we are commanded to "take unto ourselves the whole armour of God," Eph. vi. 12, 13. "Fleshly lusts" do continually "war against our souls," 1 Pet. ii. 11; and if we maintain not a warfare unto the end against them, they will

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be our ruin. Nor will the power of the world be any otherwise avoided than by a victory over it, 1 John v. 4; which will not be carried without contending. But I suppose it needs no great confirmation unto any who know what it is to serve and obey God in temptations, that the life of faith and race of holiness will not be preserved nor continued in without a severe striving, labouring, contending, warring with diligence, watchfulness, and perseverance; so that I shall at present take it as a principle, notionally at least, agreed upon by the generality of Christians. If we like not to be holy on these terms, we must let it alone; for on any other we shall never be so. If we faint in this course, if we give it over, if we think what we aim at herein not to be worth the obtaining or preserving by such a severe contention all our days, we must be content to be without it. Nothing doth so promote the interest of hell and destruction in the world as a presumption that a lazy, slothful performance of some duties and abstinence from some sins, is that which God will accept of as our obedience. Crucifying of sin, mortifying our inordinate affections, contesting against the whole interest of the flesh, Satan, and the world, and that in inward actings of grace and all instances of outward duties, and that always while we live in this world, are required of us hereunto.

Here lies the first spring of the apostasy of many in the world, of them especially who betake themselves unto and take up satisfaction in *another way* of duties than what the gospel requireth. They had, it is possible, by their light and convictions, made so near approaches unto it as to see what an incessant travail of soul is required unto its attainment and preservation.

They are like the Israelites travelling in the wilderness towards the land of Canaan. When they came near unto the borders and entrance of it, they sent some to spy it out, that they might know the nature and state of the land and country whither they were going. These, for their encouragement, and to evince the fruitfulness of the earth, bring unto them "a branch with one cluster of grapes," so great and fair that "they bare it between two upon a staff; and they brought also pomegranates and figs," Num. xiii. 23. But withal, they told them of the hideous difficulties they were to conflict withal, in that the people were strong, their cities walled, and the Anakims dwelling amongst them, verse 28. This utterly disheartens the carnal people, and, notwithstanding the prospect they had of the "land that flowed with milk and honey," back again they go into the wilderness, and there they perish.

So it is with these persons. Notwithstanding the near approach they have made, by light and convictions, unto the kingdom of God (as our Saviour told the young man, who was as one of them, Mark

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xii. 34), and the prospect they have of the beauty of holiness, yet they turn off from it again, and perish in the wilderness: for upon the view they have of the difficulties which lie in the conflict mentioned, they fall under many disadvantages, which at length utterly divert them from its pursuit; as,—

(1.) *Weariness of the flesh*, not enduring to comply with that constant course of duties continually returning upon it which is required thereunto. Various pleas will be made for an exemption from them, at least in some troublesome instances; and the carnal mind will not want pretences to countenance the flesh in its weariness. Hereon one duty after another is first omitted and then utterly foregone. Neglect of a vigorous constancy in subduing the body and bringing of it into subjection, commended by the apostle in his own example, 1 Cor. ix. 27, is with many the beginning of this kind of apostasy. These things, I say, will ofttimes fall out, that through the weariness and aversation of the flesh, countenanced by various pretences of the carnal mind, sundry duties will be omitted. But this is the faith and trial of the saints; here is the difference between sound believers and those who are acted only by convictions: Those of the first sort will, sooner or later (for the most part speedily), be humbled for such omissions, and recover their former diligence, according to the prayer of the psalmist, Ps. cxix. 176; but where this ground is won by the flesh, and men grow satisfied under the loss of any duty, it is an evidence of a hypocritical, backsliding heart.

(2.) When men are come unto the height of their convictions, and proceed no farther, *indwelling sin*, with its lusts and corrupt affections (which have for a while been checked and mated by light), *will insensibly prevail*, and weary the mind with solicitations for the exercise of its old dominion; for the spring of it being not dried, the bitter root of it being not digged up nor withered, it will not cease until it hath broke down all the bounds that were fixed unto it, and bear down convictions with force and violence.

(3.) *Ignorance of the true way of making application unto the Lord Christ for grace* and supplies of the Spirit, to bring them unto or preserve them in a state of gospel holiness, is of the same importance. Without this, to dream of being holy according unto the mind of God is to renounce the gospel. We need not look farther for men's apostasy than this, if they are satisfied with such a holiness, such an obedience, as is not derived unto us by the grace of Christ, nor wrought in us by the Spirit of Christ, nor preserved in us by the power of Christ. The way hereof such persons are always ignorant of, and at length do openly despise; yet may men as well see without the sun or light, or breathe without the air, or live without natural spirits, as engage into or abide in the practice of gospel

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holiness without continual applications unto Christ, the fountain of all grace, for spiritual strength enabling thereunto. The way and means hereof these persons being ignorant of and unacquainted withal, the holiness which the gospel requireth becomes unto them a thing strange and burdensome; which therefore they desert and refuse. If, therefore, it be true that without Christ we can do nothing,—that in our life unto God he liveth in us, and efficiently is our life; if from him, as the head, nourishment is supplied unto every living member of the body; if the life which we lead be by the faith of the Son of God; and if the only way of deriving these things and all supplies of spiritual strength from him be by the exercise of faith in him,—it follows unavoidably that all those who are unacquainted with this way, who know not how to make their application unto him for this end and purpose, can never persevere in a pursuit of gospel holiness. So hath it fallen out and no otherwise with them concerning whom we speak. As ignorance of the righteousness of God, or of Christ being the end of the law for righteousness unto them that do believe, is the reason why men go about to establish a righteousness of their own, and will not submit to the righteousness of God; so ignorance of the grace which is continually to be received from Christ in a way of believing, that we may be holy with gospel holiness, is the reason why so many turn off from it unto another kind of holiness of their own framing, which yet is not another, because it is none at all. But many are so far from endeavouring after or abiding in gospel holiness on this foundation of continual supplies of grace from Jesus Christ to that end, as that they avowedly despise all holiness and obedience springing from that fountain or growing on that root; in which case God will judge. In the meantime, I say (and the matter is evident) that one principal reason why men turn off from it upon the prospect of the difficulties that attend it, and the oppositions that are made unto it, is their unbelief and ignorance of the way of making application unto Christ by faith for supplies of spiritual strength and grace.

(4.) *Unacquaintedness with the true nature of evangelical repentance* is another cause hereof. This is that grace which comfortably carrieth the souls of believers through all their failings, infirmities, and sins; nor are they able to live to God one day without the constant exercise of it. They find it as necessary unto the continuance of spiritual life as faith itself. It is not only a means of our entrance into, but it belongs essentially unto, our gospel state and our continuance therein. Hereunto belongs that continual humble self-abasement, from a sense of the majesty and holiness of God, with the disproportion of the best of our duties unto his will, which believers live and walk in continually; and he that is not sensible of a

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gracious sweetness and usefulness therein knows not what it is to walk with God. Hereby doth God administer several encouragements unto our souls to abide in our way of obedience, notwithstanding the many discouragements and despondencies we meet withal. In brief, take it away, and you overthrow faith, and hope, and all other graces. Those, therefore, who are unacquainted with the nature and use of this grace and duty, who can taste no spiritual refreshment in all its sorrows, who know nothing of it but legal troubles, anguish, fear, and distraction, will not endure the thought of living in the practice of it all their days; which yet is as necessary unto gospel holiness as faith itself. Men, I say, falling into this condition, finding all these difficulties to conflict withal, and lying under these disadvantages, if any thing will offer itself in the room of this costly holiness, will readily embrace it. Hence, as some betake themselves unto a pretence of morality (which as unto many is a mere pretence, and made use of only to countenance themselves in a neglect of the whole of that obedience which the gospel openly requireth), so others do, under other expressions, retreat unto the mere duties of their own light, and these as only required therein, with some peculiar reliefs unto the flesh in what is burdensome unto it. As, for instance: There is nothing that the flesh more riseth up in a dislike of and opposition unto than constancy in the duty of prayer, in private, in families, on all occasions, especially if attended unto in a spiritual manner, as the gospel doth require; but in itself, and as to the substance of it, it is a duty which the light of nature exacteth of us;—but whereas this may prove burdensome to the flesh, a relief is borrowed from a pretence of gospel light and liberty, that men need not pray at any time unless their own spirits or light do previously require it of them: which is to turn the grace of God into an occasion of sinning. By this means some have gotten a holiness, wherein, for the most part, it seems indifferent to them whether they pray at any time or no. And other instances of the like kind might be given. Upon the whole matter, to free themselves from this state, so uneasy to flesh and blood, so contrary unto all the imaginations of the carnal mind, some men have betaken themselves unto another, wherein they have, or pretend to have, no conflict against sin, nor to need any application unto the Lord Christ for supplies of spiritual strength; which belongs not unto that holiness which the gospel requires and which God accepts.

It may be said that in some of the instances before given, especially in that of the Papacy, there is an appearance of a greater conflict with and more hardships put on the flesh than in any other way of obedience that is pleaded for; and there is indeed such an *appearance*, but it is no more. The oppositions that arise against

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their austerities are from without, or from nature as it is weak, but not as it is carnal. It is possible that sin may not be concerned in what they do, neither in its power nor reign; yea, so far as it is leavened by superstition, it acts itself therein no less than it doth in others by fleshly lusts. But it is an internal, spiritual, immediate opposition unto its being and all its actings, that it riseth up with such rage against as to weary those who have not that living principle of faith whereto the victory over it doth peculiarly appertain.

2. This evangelical holiness will not allow of nor will consist with the constant, *habitual* omission of any *one duty*, or the satisfaction of *any one lust* of the mind or of the flesh. As we are, in all instances of duty, to be "perfecting holiness in the fear of God," 2 Cor. vii. 1, so "no provision is to be made for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof," Rom. xiii. 14. This is that which loseth it so many friends in the world. Would it barter with the flesh, would it give and take allowances in any kind, or grant indulgence unto any one sin, multitudes would have a kindness for it which now bid it defiance. Every one would have an exemption for that sin which he likes best, and which is most suited to his inclinations and carnal interests. And this would be virtually a dispensation for all unholiness whatever. But these are the terms of the gospel: No one duty is to be neglected, no one sin is to be indulged; and they are looked upon as intolerable. Naaman would not give himself up unto the worship of the God of Israel but with this reserve, that he might also bow in the house of Rimmon, whereon his power and preferment did depend. Many things the young man in the Gospel boasted himself to have done, and was doubtless willing to continue in the performance of them; but yet, through his whole course, the love of the world had the prevalency in him, and when he was tried in that instance, rather than relinquish it he gave up the whole. But this is the law of the gospel. Although it provide a merciful relief against those daily sins which we are overtaken withal by our frailty and weakness, or surprised into by the power of temptations, against the bent of our minds and habitual inclination of our wills, 1 Pet. iv. 1, 2, yet it alloweth not the cherishing or practice of any one sin whatever, internal or external. An habitual course in any sin is utterly inconsistent with evangelical obedience, 1 John iii. 6–9, yea, it requireth indispensably that we be engaged, in our minds and wills, in an opposition unto all sin, and in a constant endeavour after its not-being in us, either in the root or in the fruit thereof. It will not connive at or comply with any inordinate affection, any habitual sinful distemper, nor the first motions of sin that are in the flesh. This is that *perfection* which is required in the new covenant, Gen. xvii. 1, that sincerity, integrity, freedom from guile, walking after the

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Spirit, and not after the flesh, and that newness of life, which the gospel everywhere prescribeth unto us. On no other terms but universality in obedience and opposition unto sin will it approve of us, 1 John iii. 7–10.

And this occasioneth the turning aside of many from the pursuit of an endeavour to be holy, according unto the rule of the gospel. When by light and convictions they come to take a view of what is required thereunto, it disliketh them, they cannot bear it; and therefore they either at once or gradually give over all ways of pursuing their first design. And men break with the gospel on this account by the means ensuing:—

(1.) They cannot make the *same judgment of sin* that the gospel doth, nor will judge all those things to be sin and evil which the gospel declares so to be; yea, we have some come unto that pharisaism, that they scarce think any thing to be sinful or worth taking notice of unless it be openly flagitious. Under this darkness and ignorance, all sorts of filthy, noisome lusts may be cherished in the hearts of men, keeping them at as great and real a distance from the holiness of truth as the most outrageous outward sins can do. And this neglect or refusal to comply with the rule of the gospel before laid down is grounded in and promoted by two occasions:—

[1.] They have a *willing insensibility* of the guilt of some *unmortified lust*. This they will abide in and cherish; for their minds being habituated unto it, they find no great evil in it, nor do see any cogent reason why they should forego it. So was it with the young man with respect unto the love of the world. He was sorry that he could not be evangelically obedient whilst he retained it; but seeing that could not be, he did not discern any such evil in, nor was sensible of any such guilt from it, nor could apprehend any such equality in or necessity of gospel holiness, that he should renounce the one for the embracing the other. So will it be when any lust is made familiar unto the mind; it will not be terrified with it, nor can see any great danger in it. It is between such a soul and sin as it is between the devil and the witch, or one that hath a familiar spirit, as we render the Hebrew "ob" [אוֹב] and "yideoni," [יִדְּעֹנִי]. At the first appearance of the devil, be it in what shape it will, it cannot but bring a tremor and fear on human nature, but after a while he becomes a familiar; and when alone he is to be feared, he is not feared at all. The poor deceived wretch then thinks him in his power, so that he can use or command him as he sees good, whereas he himself is absolutely in the power of the devil. Men may be startled with sin in its first appearance, on their first convictions, or its first dangerous efforts; but when it is become their familiar, they suppose it a thing in their own power, which they can use or not use

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as they see occasion, though indeed themselves are the servants of corruption, being overcome thereby and brought into bondage. Hence it is inconceivable how little sense of guilt in some sins men find after they are habituated unto them. In some sins, I say, for with respect unto sins absolutely against the light of nature, conscience will not easily be bribed not to condemn them. It will not in such cases be speechless, until it be seared and made senseless. But there are sins not accompanied with so great an evidence, yet attended with no less guilt than those which directly militate against the light of nature. In this case, when the word of the gospel comes as it is "living and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of the soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, as a discoverer and judge of the thoughts and intents of the heart;" when it comes and discovers the secret frames, figments, imaginations, and inclinations of the mind, and condemneth what is in the least measure or manner irregular; when it will not be put off, nor accept of any composition or compensation by the most strict and rigid profession in other things,—men are ready to withdraw themselves to the rule of their own light and reason, which they find more gentle and tractable.

[2.] A dereliction of the gospel on this account, with respect unto the *inwardness, spirituality, and extent of its commands*, is much increased under the influence of corrupt opinions. And of this nature are all those which tend unto the extenuation of sin; for some there are who suppose that there is not such a provoking guilt, such a spiritual outrage in sin, as others pretend. Hence multitudes, as they judge, are needlessly troubled and perplexed about it. "A generous mind, free from superstitious fears and dark conceits imbibed in education, will deliver the mind of man from the trouble of such apprehensions;—a great sense of the guilt of small sins is an engine to promote the interest of preachers, and those who pretend to the conduct of conscience;—the filth and pollution of sin is a metaphor which few can understand, and none ought to be concerned in;—that the power of the remainders of indwelling sin is a foolish notion; and that the disorderly frames of the heart and the mind, through darkness, deadness, spiritual indisposition, or other secret irregularities, are fancies, not sins, which we need not be troubled at ourselves, nor make any acknowledgment of unto God;"—these and the like opinions are the pharisaical corban of our age, corrupting the whole law of our obedience. And it were easy to manifest how perilous and ruinous they are unto the souls of men; what powerful instruments in the hand of Satan to eclipse the glory of the grace of Christ on the one hand, and to promote apostasy from holiness in the hearts and lives of men on the other. I shall only say, set the

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corrupt heart of men by any means at liberty from an awe and reverence of the holiness of God and his law with respect unto the inward actings and frames of the soul, with a sense of guilt where they are irregular, and a necessity of constant humiliation before God thereon, and an equally constant application of itself unto the Lord Christ for grace and mercy, and it is wholly in vain to think of fixing any bounds unto the progress of sin. The ignorance hereof is that which hath produced in some the proud imagination of perfection, when they are far enough from bringing their consciences and lives to the rule of the gospel, but only aggravate their guilt by attempting to bend that inflexible rule unto their own perverse and crooked minds.

(2.) In this case, *carnal interest*, which takes in and compriseth all the circumstances of men, *calls for an indulgence unto some one sin* or other, which the gospel will not admit of. Pride or ambition, covetousness or love of this present evil world and the perishing things of it, uncleanness or sensuality in eating and drinking, self-exaltation and boasting, vain-glory, idleness, one or other must be spared. One thing or other, I say, on the account of carnal interest, —either because small, or useful, or general, or suited unto a natural temper, or, as is supposed, made necessary by the occasions of life,— must be reserved. Where this resolution prevails, as men are absolutely excluded from any real interest in gospel holiness, which will admit of no such reserves, so it will not fail to lead them into open apostasy of one kind or other; for,—

[1.] Such persons are *unapproved of God in all that they do*, and so have no ground for expectation of his blessing or assistance; for the allowance of the least sin is such an impeachment of sincerity as casteth a man out of covenant communion with God. This is that "offending in one point" which ruins a man's obedience, and renders him guilty against the whole law, James ii. 10. Any one actual sin makes a man guilty of the curse of the whole law as it contains the covenant of works; and the willing allowance of a man's self in any one sin habitually breaks the whole law as it contains the rule of our obedience in the covenant of grace. And if in this disapproved condition men meet with outward prosperity in the world, their danger will be increased as well as their guilt aggravated. And the utmost care of professors is required in this matter; for there seems to be among many an open indulgence unto habitual disorders, which hazards their whole covenant interest, and must fill them with uncertainty in their own minds. High time it is for all such persons to shake off "every weight, and the sin that doth so easily beset them, and to run with redoubled diligence" the remainder of "the race that is set before them."

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[2.] This *indulgence unto any one sin* will make way in the minds, consciences, and affections of men, for the admission of *other sins* also. It will be like a thief that is hidden in a house, and only waits an opportunity to open the doors unto his other companions; to this end he watcheth for a season of sleep and darkness, when there is none to observe his actings. Let a person who thus alloweth himself to live in any sin fall into temptation whilst he is a little more than ordinary careless, his allowed corruption shall open his heart unto any other sin that offers for admission. "Look not," saith the wise man, "upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright. Thine eyes shall behold strange women, and thine heart shall utter perverse things," Prov. xxiii. 31, 33. One sin liked and loved will make way for every other. There is a kindred and alliance between sins of all sorts, and they agree in the same end and design. Where any one is willingly entertained, others will intrude themselves beyond all our power of resistance.

[3.] It will *divert the soul from the use of those means whereby all other sins should be resisted*, and thereby apostasy prevented; for there is no means appointed or sanctified by God for the resistance or mortification of sin, but it opposeth sin as sin, and consequently every thing that is so, and that because it is so. Wherefore, whoever willingly reserves any one sin from the efficacy of the means God hath appointed for its mortification doth equally reserve all. And as those means do lose their power and efficacy towards such persons, so they will insensibly fall off from a conscientious attendance unto any of those ways and duties whereby sin should be opposed and ruined.

3. Many of the graces in whose exercise this evangelical holiness doth principally consist are *such as are of no reputation* in the world. The greatest moralists that ever were, whether Pharisees or philosophers, could never separate between their love and practice of virtue on the one hand, and their own honour, glory, and reputation on the other. There was in them, as the poet expresseth it in one instance,—

"Amor patriæ, laudumque immensa cupido."

Hence they always esteemed those virtues the most excellent which had the best acceptation and the greatest vogue of praise among men. And it seems to be ingrafted in the nature of man to have some kind of desire to be approved in what men judge themselves to do well and laudably. Neither is this desire so evil in itself but that it may be managed in subordination unto the glory of God; which nothing that is absolutely evil, or in its own nature or any con-

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siderations or circumstances, can be. But when at any time it swells into an excess, and the pharisaical leaven of being seen and praised of men puffeth it up, it is the worst poison that the mind can be infected withal. In what degree soever it be admitted, in the same it alienates the mind from gospel holiness; and it doth so effectually, —I mean this self-love and love of the praise of others doth so,—for the reason mentioned, namely, that the graces in whose exercise it doth principally consist are of no reputation in the world. Such are meekness, gentleness, self-denial, poverty of spirit, mourning for sin, hungering and thirsting after righteousness, mercy and compassion, purity of heart, openness and simplicity of spirit, readiness to undergo and forgive injuries, zeal for God, contempt of the world, fear of sin, dread of God's judgment for sin, and the like. These are those adornings of the inner man of the heart which with God are of great price. But as unto their reputation in the world, "weakness, softness of nature, superstitious folly, madness, hypocritical preciseness," is the best measure they meet withal. When men begin to discern that as unto this holiness of the gospel, its principal work lies within doors, in the heart and mind, in the things that no mortal eye seeth and few commend so much as in the notion of them, and which in their outward exercise meet with no good entertainment in the world, they betake themselves unto and rest in those duties which make a better appearance and meet with better acceptance; and many of them are such as, in their proper place, are diligently to be attended unto, provided they draw not off the mind from an attendance unto those despised graces and their exercise wherein the life of true holiness doth consist. And it is well if we are all sufficiently aware of the deceits of Satan in this matter. In the beginnings of the general apostasy from the power and purity of Christian religion, to countenance all sorts of persons in a neglect of the principal graces of the gospel, the necessity of regeneration, and a heavenly principle of spiritual life, they were put wholly on outward splendid works of piety and charity, as they were esteemed. Let their minds be defiled, their lusts unmortified, their hearts unhumbled, their whole souls unfurnished of spiritual and heavenly graces, yet (as they would have it) these outward works should assuredly bring them all unto a blessed immortality and glory! But this face of the covering, this veil that was spread over many nations, being now in many places (particularly among us) rent and destroyed, both wisdom and much circumspection are required, that, either under a pretence or under a real endeavour after the inward spiritual graces of Christ and their due exercise, we do not countenance ourselves in the neglect of those outward duties which are any way useful unto the glory of God and the good of mankind.

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These are some of the causes, and others there are of an alike nature, from the powerful influence whereof upon their minds men have changed gospel holiness for other ways of obedience, which also they give other names unto.

CHAPTER IX.

Apostasy into profaneness and sensuality of life—The causes and occasions of it—Defects in public teachers and guides in religion.

THAT which yet remaineth to be considered under this head of backsliding from the commands of the gospel and the obedience required of them is of a worse kind and of a more pernicious consequence; and this is that open apostasy into profaneness and sensuality of life which the generality of them who are called Christians are in most places of the world visibly fallen into. If any be otherwise minded, if they suppose and judge that the ways and walkings of the generality of churches and individual Christians, of whole nations that profess themselves to be so, are such as the gospel requireth and approveth of, they seem either to be ignorant of the true state of these things in the world, or to be highly injurious unto the grace and truth which came by Jesus Christ. To suppose that he by his gospel giveth countenance unto or conniveth at that darkness, profaneness, sensuality, those bloody contentions and oppressions, in a word, all those filthy and noxious lusts, which at this day have overwhelmed the Christian world, is to do what we can to render and represent it not only useless, but extremely pernicious unto mankind; for we do say therein that by him and his doctrine countenance is given unto that degeneracy in wickedness which heathenism would not allow, whereby the world is filled with confusion, and in danger to be precipitated into ruin. I shall therefore at present take it for granted (with the highest readiness to give up that concession when any tolerable evidence shall be given to the contrary) that there is, among and in the churches whereunto the generality of Christians do reckon themselves to belong, a visible apostasy from that piety, holiness, and righteousness, which the gospel indispensably requireth in all the disciples of Christ, and which the primitive Christians did earnestly follow and eminently abound in. An inquiry into the means and causes hereof is that which now lies before us. And that especial instance which I shall always regard is the church of Rome; which, as it hath given the most eminent example of apostasy in this kind of any church in the world, so whatever of the same nature befalleth others, it is sufficiently represented therein.

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The immediate *internal* causes (which are, as the rise and original of all sins, so of those wherein this apostasy doth consist, because they are not peculiar hereunto, but equally respect all sins at all times) belong not unto our present inquiry. By these causes I intend, in general, the depravation of nature; the power and deceitfulness of sin; love of the world, the profits, honours, and pleasures of it; the rage of the flesh after the satisfaction of its sensual lusts; with the aversation of the minds of men from things spiritual and heavenly, as being "alienated from the life of God" through the darkness and ignorance that is in them: for these and the like depraved affections, being excited and acted by the crafty influences of Satan, and inflamed with temptations, do incline, induce, and carry men into all manner of wickedness with delight and greediness, James i. 14, 15. But whereas all these things in general respect equally all times, occasions, and sins; and whereas it is the constant work of the ministers of the gospel (those, I mean, who understand their employment, with the account they must give of the souls committed unto their charge) to discover the nature, detect the deceit, and warn men of the danger, of these principles and occasions of sin within them and without them,—I shall not need particularly here to insist upon them. It is the more public external means and causes which have produced, furthered, and promoted the apostasy complained of, that we shall take under consideration.

I. The first *occasion* hereof, in all ages, hath been given by or taken from the *public teachers*, guides, or leaders of the people in the matter of religion. I intend them of all sorts, however called, styled, or distinguished, into what forms or orders soever they are cast by themselves or others; and I name them so at large, because it is known how variously they are multiplied, especially in the church of Rome, where, as to these parts of the world, this apostasy began, and by which it is principally promoted, and that by all sorts of them. These at all times have, and must have, an especial influence into the holiness or unholiness of the people; yea, the purity or apostasy of the church, as to outward means, doth principally depend upon them, with the discharge of their office and duty. In many things they succeed into the room of the priests of old, and frequently fall under the command and rebuke given unto them, Mal. ii. 1–9, "O ye priests, this commandment is for you. If ye will not hear, and if ye will not lay it to heart, to give glory unto my name, saith the LORD of hosts, I will even send a curse upon you, and I will curse your blessings: yea, I have cursed them already, because ye do not lay it to heart. Behold, I will corrupt your seed, and spread dung upon your faces, even the dung of your solemn feasts; and one shall take you away with it. And ye shall know that I have sent this

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commandment unto you, that my covenant might be with Levi, saith the LORD of hosts. My covenant was with him of life and peace; and I gave them to him for the fear wherewith he feared me, and was afraid before my name. The law of truth was in his mouth, and iniquity was not found in his lips: he walked with me in peace and equity, and did turn many away from iniquity. For the priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth: for he is the messenger of the LORD of hosts. But ye are departed out of the way; ye have caused many to stumble at the law; ye have corrupted the covenant of Levi, saith the LORD of hosts. Therefore have I also made you contemptible and base before all the people, according as ye have not kept my ways, but have been partial in the law."

That holy, humble, laborious ministry, which Christ first instituted in the church, was the great means of converting men unto evangelical obedience and the preserving of them therein. This their doctrine, their spirit, their example, their manner and course of life, their prayers, preaching, and entire endeavours, tended unto, and were blessed and prospered of God unto that purpose. Then were the lives of Christians a transcript of the truth of the gospel. But through the degeneracy of the following ages, those who succeeded them became troubled fountains, polluting and corrupting all the streams of Christian religion. It is no uneasy thing to observe, in the course of ecclesiastical records and stories, how, by various degrees, the leaders of the church became corrupt, and did corrupt the people, giving them in themselves an example of strifes, divisions, ambition, worldly-mindedness; and, by their negligence in discharge of their duty, depriving them of the means of being made better by the power of the doctrine and commands of the gospel. Under the old testament, the priests and prophets led the people into a double apostasy:—First, Into that of superstition and idolatry, Jer. xxiii. 9–15; and this continued prevailing among them until their sin issued in a desolating calamity. This was the Babylonish captivity, wherein all their idols were buried in the land of Shinar, Zech. v. 11. Secondly, After the return of the people from thence, when they would no more be inveigled into idolatry, whereof God designed that captivity for an effectual cure, the same sort of persons, by negligence, ignorance, and their evil example in profaneness, turned them off from God and his law. This was begun in the days of Malachi, the last of the prophets, and ended in the total apostasy and destruction of that church and people. And when the whole came unto its last issue in the rejection of the Lord Christ, the Son of God, the same sort of persons, even the guides and teachers, led, and even forced, the body of the people into that great rebellion and impenitency therein, as is evi-

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dently declared in the gospel. And it is to be feared that something of the like nature hath fallen out among Christians also. The first apostasy the Christian world fell into was by superstition and idolatry, principally under the conduct of the church of Rome; and this, as it will always be, was accompanied with wickedness of life in all sorts of persons. Many churches and nations being delivered from this abomination, it is well if, by the same means, they are not falling into that of a worldly, sensual, profane conversation.

The Scripture is so full on this subject, and the nature of the thing itself is such, as seems to require a deep and thorough consideration of it; but the nature of my design will not admit of enlargement on any particular head, for I intend only to point at the chief springs and occasions of this evil, and accordingly this part of our subject must be only briefly (as that preceding) treated on.

What was before asserted in general, namely, that *the well-being of the church depends on the right discharge of the office of the ministry*, will, I suppose, be acknowledged by all; and it is plainly declared by the apostle, Eph. iv. 11–15. In proportion thereunto it will thrive or decay. The nature of this office, the ends of its institution, the works and duties of it, with the universal experience of all ages and places, do evince this observation beyond all contradiction. If, therefore, those who undertake the exercise of this office do eminently and notoriously fail in the performance and discharge of the duties thereof, especially if they do so generally, and in any long succession of time, it cannot be but that the people will be corrupt, and degenerate from the rule of the gospel. The flocks will not be preserved where the shepherds are negligent; and fields will be overrun with weeds, thorns, and briers, if they be not duly tilled. I shall therefore, in the first place, call over some of those things which are indispensably required in and of the ministers and teachers of the church, that it may be preserved in its purity, and kept up unto its duty in evangelical obedience; and I shall insist only on those which all men will acknowledge to be such duties, or which none who own the gospel can or dare deny so to be:—

First, It is required of them that *they keep pure and uncorrupted the doctrine of the gospel*, especially that concerning the holiness enjoined in it, both as to its *nature*, *causes*, *motives*, and *ends*. So of old, the "priest's lips were to keep knowledge," and "the people were to seek the law at his mouth." This was one main end for which the Lord Christ gave unto, and instituted the office of the ministry in the church: Eph. iv. 11–15, "He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith,

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and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: that we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; but speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ." The preservation of the truth, the declaration, vindication, and defence of it, so as the members of the church, the disciples of Christ, committed to their charge, be neither through weakness or ignorance as children, nor through the delusions of seducers, turned off from it or unsettled in it, was one great end why the Lord Christ instituted this office therein. And upon their discharge of this duty depend the growth, the obedience, the edification, and salvation, of the whole body. And therefore doth the apostle give this principally in charge unto the elders of the church of Ephesus, in his solemn giving of it up unto their care and inspection, when he himself was no more to come among them: Acts xx. 28–30, "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them." As he hath a regard unto other things, so in an especial manner to the introduction of perverse and corrupt opinions, contrary to the truth wherein they had been instructed by him, which comprised "all the counsel of God" concerning their faith and obedience, with his own worship, verse 27. This they were to do by their careful, faithful, diligent declaration, vindication, and defence, of the doctrine which they had received. Especially doth he press this upon his beloved Timothy. He being for a season fixed in the ministry of the church, he was chosen out by the wisdom of the Holy Ghost to be a pattern and example, in the instructions given unto him, unto all ministers of the gospel in succeeding generations. This charge is expressly committed unto him, 1 Tim. vi. 13, 14, "I give thee charge in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things, and before Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession; that thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ." Verse 20, "O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called." 2 Tim. ii. 13, 14, "If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself. Of these things put them in remembrance, charging them before the Lord that they strive not about words to no profit, but to the sub-

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verting of the hearers." And what he was enjoined in his own person, that also he was directed to commit unto others with the same charge, that the truth of the gospel might be preserved incorrupt in succeeding generations, 2 Tim. ii. 1, 2, "Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also." The vehemency of the apostle in this charge, and his pathetical exhortations, do sufficiently evince the moment and necessity of this duty, as that without which the church would not be continued to be "the pillar and ground of the truth."

There are three repositories of sacred truth, or of the truths of the mystery of the gospel,—the *Scripture, the minds and hearts of believers,* and the *ministry of the present age.* In the first, God preserveth them by his *providence;* in the second, by his *Spirit* and grace; in the last, by way of an *ordinance* or especial institution for that end.

In the first way they have been kept, and shall be kept, safe against all oppositions of hell and the world, unto the consummation of all things. And if this way might fail, we acknowledge that the others would do so also, whatever some pretend of their traditions, and others of their present inspirations. And whilst this doth abide (as it shall always do), the loss that may befall in the other ways may be retrieved; and so it hath been several times, when the faith of the church hath been recovered and its profession reformed by the light and knowledge derived afresh from the Scripture. This fountain, therefore, of truth shall never be dry, but men may always draw sufficiently, yea, abundantly from it, whilst they use the means appointed thereunto. But yet this alone will not secure the public interest of truth and holiness. There must be other means also of communicating what is contained therein unto the minds and consciences of men; and the Scripture itself doth both appoint and require a ministry unto this end. Secondly, There may be a preservation of the truth derived from the Scripture for a season in the minds of men and hearts of private believers. So was it in the days of Elijah, when, in a destitution of all outward ministry, seven thousand were preserved in faith and the fear of God, "not bowing the knee unto Baal," 1 Kings xix. 18. This the Holy Ghost is in an especial manner promised and given unto them to effect, John xiv. 16, 17, 26, xvi. 13; 1 John ii. 20, 21: for herein is the promise accomplished, that "they shall be all taught of God," John vi 45; which though it be not wholly without means, yet it is such as doth not always and in all things indispensably depend thereon, Heb. viii. 11 And unto this work of the Spirit preserving the truth in the minds and

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hearts of true believers, the continuance of it in the world, as to its power and profession, under great and general apostasies, is to be ascribed. So I no way doubt but that during and under the papal defection, there were great numbers in whose hearts and minds the principal truths of the gospel were preserved inviolate, so as that by virtue of them they lived unto God and were accepted with him. But this way of the preservation of the truth is confined unto individual persons, and as such only are they concerned therein. [Thirdly], As unto public profession and the benefits thereof, all sacred truth is committed unto the ministry of the present age; and on the due discharge of their office and work it doth depend. The imagination of the church of Rome about keeping sacred truths in the hidden cells of *tradition* or invisible, fantastical treasures, which requires neither care, nor wisdom, nor honesty unto its custody, but a mere pretence of key to open it, was one engine whereby both truth and holiness were driven out of the world.

These things are inseparable. *Gospel truth* is the only root whereon *gospel holiness* will grow. If any worm corrode, or any other corrupting accident befall it, the fruit will quickly fade and decay. It is impossible to maintain the power of godliness where the doctrine from whence it springs is unknown, corrupted, or despised. And, on the other side, where men are weary of holiness, they will not long give entertainment to the truth; for as to their desires and affections, they will find it not only useless but troublesome. Hence the great opposition which is made at this day against many important truths of the gospel ariseth principally from the dislike men have of the holiness which they guide unto and require.

Secondly, It is required of the same persons that they diligently *instruct the people* in the knowledge of the whole counsel of God, in the mystery of the gospel, the doctrine of truth, that they may know and do the will of God; and this are they to do by all the means and ways that God hath appointed, pressing it instantly, together with instructions on their souls and consciences for its practice. The end why evangelical truth is committed unto their care is, not that they may keep it to themselves, so locking up the key of knowledge, but that they may communicate it unto others and instruct them therein. And he who doth not desire and endeavour to communicate unto his flock all things that are profitable for them can have no evidence in his own mind that God hath called him to the office of the ministry. The apostle, proposing his own example unto the elders of the church of Ephesus, affirms that he had "not shunned to declare unto them all the counsel of God," Acts xx. 27, and that he had "kept back nothing that was profitable unto them," verse 20. Men begin to talk or write about preaching on this or

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that subject: some, they say, preach all about Christ and grace, and justification by the imputation of Christ's righteousness, and the like; but they preach about God's attributes, moral duties, obedience to superiors, and things of that nature. But whether this fancy have more folly or malice in it is not easy to determine. It is like those who make this plea do speak truly as to their own concernment. They preach of the things they express, exclusively unto the others, which they meddle not with at all; for if they do teach them, then is the opposition they fancy between those ways of preaching altogether vain. But that others do preach the things ascribed unto them, with a neglect of those other doctrines, which such persons pretend to appropriate to themselves as their province, is a fond imagination. And, to increase the vanity of it, the distribution is made by some with a total silence on all hands,—both on their own, which they extol, and on that of others, which they condemn,—of that which certainly ought to be the principal subject of all preaching, namely, Jesus Christ and him crucified. But the truth is, he who knows not that it is his duty to declare unto the people, not this or that part of it, but the whole counsel of God, and who is not endowed with some measure of wisdom, so as to discern what is useful, profitable, and seasonable unto his hearers, according as their spiritual states and occasions do require, knows not what it is to be a minister of Christ or his gospel, a faithful steward of the mysteries of God, nor is meet to take that office upon him. And there are three things which ministers, teachers, leaders of the people, are to attend unto in the discharge of this principal part of their office, in the communication of the knowledge of the truth committed to them unto others:—

1. That they are to do it with all *care, diligence, and sedulity.* How vehement is our apostle in his charge to this purpose! 2 Tim. iv. 1, 2, "I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine." How ought these words to sound continually in the ears of all ministers who design to be faithful in the discharge of their duty! How ought the power of them to abide on their hearts! Are they spoken alone unto Timothy? or will the souls of men be preserved, edified, saved, now with less pains and at an easier rate than formerly? It will appear at the last day that others also have an eternal concernment herein.

2. That they labour with the *utmost of their strength*, even to fatigation and weariness. All the names whereby their office and their work are expressed in the New Testament do include this kind of labour. As they are to "give themselves continually to the ministry

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of the word," Acts vi. 4,—that is, wholly and entirely, in their utmost endeavours, continually unto this work,—so are they enjoined κοπιᾷν, "to labour to the utmost of the strength" they have therein, 1 Tim. v. 17; 1 Cor. xvi. 16; 1 Thess. v. 12. It is not bodily labour alone in the dispensation of the word (wherein there may be much variety, according unto the various natural dispositions or tempers of men, and of acquired gifts), but that earnestness and intension of spirit which will carry along with them the laborious pains of the whole person, that I intend. The cold, formal pronunciation or reading (as is the manner of some) of a well-composed oration doth not well express this labouring in the word and doctrine.

3. That their whole work and all their endeavours therein be accompanied with *constant prayer*, that the gospel in their ministry may run and be glorified, that the word may prosper in the hearts and lives of the people. So the apostles affirm that they would "give themselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word," Acts vi. 4. That ministration of the word which is not accompanied with continual prayer for its success is not like to have any great blessing go along with it. As our apostle calls God to witness of his frequent mention of them in his prayers unto whom the word was preached, Rom. i. 9, 10, so he desireth the prayers of others also, that his work and labour in the ministry might be prosperous and successful, Eph. vi. 18, 19. For a minister to preach the word without constant prayer for its success is a likely means to cherish and strengthen secret atheism in his own heart, and very unlikely to work holiness in the lives of others.

Thirdly, It is in like manner required of them (so far as human frailty will permit) that *they do, in their persons, ways, and walkings or conversations, especially in the discharge of all their ministerial duties, give a true representation both of the doctrine which they preach and of Him in whose name they dispense it.* What meekness, humility, and zeal for the glory of God; what moderation, self-denial, and readiness for the cross; what mortification of corrupt affections and inordinate desires of earthly things; what contempt of the world; what benignity, condescension, and patience towards all men; what evidences of heavenly-mindedness,—are required hereunto, both the Scripture declares and the nature of the thing itself makes apparent. What can any men rationally believe, but that they who preach Christ and the gospel unto them do declare that they have no other effect or tendency but what in themselves they express and represent unto them? There is a secret language in the ministry of men, that what they are and do is that which the doctrine they preach doth require, which their hearers do understand and are apt to believe. The very philosophers saw that so it would be with

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respect unto them who publicly taught philosophy; to which purpose the words of Themistius are remarkable: Orat. 1, Ἀνελευθέρους τε δὴ οὖν οὕτως εὑρίσκοντες καὶ φιλοχρημάτους τε καὶ ἅρπαγες, λοιδόρους τε καὶ φιλαπεχθήμονας καὶ ἀλαζόνας, δολεροὺς τε καὶ ἐπιζουλους, οὐκ οἰήσονται ἐκ φύσεως ἢ τῆς προτέρας βαναυσίας ἔχειν τὰς κῆρας, ἀλλ' αἰτιάσονται ἐκ φιλοσοφίας προσγίνεσθαι. Whatever vices most men observe in such persons, they will not attribute them unto their depraved natures or inward corruptions, but unto the philosophy they profess. Hence it is enjoined them that in "all things they show themselves patterns of good works," Tit. ii. 7; 2 Thess. iii. 9. "Be thou," saith our apostle unto his Timothy, "an example unto believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity," 1 Tim. iv. 12. This is the dignity, honour, and preferment, that the Lord Christ calls his ministers unto, namely, that they should in their own persons represent his graces and the holiness of his doctrine unto others. Those who are otherwise minded, whose designs and affections look another way, will find themselves to fall under the effects of a great mistake. I do not reflect any thing upon what outward, secular, circumstantial advantages men may have in this world, but I do say, whatever they have of that kind which doth not enable them the more effectually in their course and work to express the meekness, humility, self-denial, and zeal of Christ, with the holiness of the doctrine they teach, or should so do, it will not redound unto any great account in the kingdom of God.

Fourthly, It is also incumbent on them to attend with diligence unto that *rule and holy discipline* which the Lord Christ hath appointed for the edification of the church, and the preservation of it in purity, holiness, and obedience. This, indeed, most pretend a readiness to comply withal, as that which is condited unto their appetite by an appearance of authority and power, which seldom are unaccompanied with other desirable advantages. I shall only say, it will be well for them by whom they are administered according to the mind of Christ; but that more belongeth thereunto than is usually apprehended so to do, I suppose few sober and intelligent persons will deny.

That these things, yea, and many others of the like kind, with all those duties which are subservient or any way necessary unto them, are required of all ministers of the gospel, teachers, guides, rulers of the church, and that constantly to be attended unto with zeal for the glory of God and compassion for the souls of men, none, I suppose, who profess themselves Christians will in general deny. And if in these things the life and power of the ministry (whereon the purity and holiness of the church depend) do consist, where they are wanting, it is morally impossible but that the generality of the people

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will gradually degenerate into ignorance, profaneness, immorality, and unholiness of every kind.

There is nothing I could more desire than that the present defection from evangelical holiness, which is so visible in the world, might neither in whole nor in part be charged on a defect in these things among this sort of men, yea, that it might not be so unto qualifications, principles, and actings directly contrary unto what is thus required; for if it be not so, there will be yet hopes of a stay to be put unto its progress, yea, of a healing and recovery from it. But I shall a little inquire into that which offers itself unto the view of all, premising these two things:—1. That I do not intend the ministry of any one place or nation, or age or time, more than another, but shall speak indefinitely unto what hath been and is in the Christian world. 2. That if indeed, upon trial, none be found blameworthy, none defective in these things, there is no harm done in that any are warned what to avoid. And,—

1. Have they all kept the truth, and doctrine, and mysteries of the gospel, committed to the ministers thereof? Are there not many of this sort who are themselves *wofully ignorant of the counsel of God* revealed therein? nay, are there not many who have neither will nor ability to search into the mysteries of the doctrine of Christ, and do therefore despise them? Can men keep in a way of duty what they never had, nor ever used those means for the attaining of it without which it will not be so done? And is it not manifest what must needs be, and what really are, the effects and fruits hereof? Do not hereon multitudes perish for want of knowledge and continue in the ways of sin because they have none to teach them better, at least none to teach them on such principles as are alone effectual unto their conversion and holiness? They must die, they shall die in their sins, but the blood of their souls will be required at other hands; for all the causes of gospel holiness, all proper motives unto it, all effectual ways and means of attaining it, are hid from them.

It is known how brutishly ignorant the generality of their priests are in the Papacy; neither, for the most part, do the rulers of that church require any more of them than that they have skill enough to read and manage their public offices of devotion. Neither is it much otherwise in the Greek church, in any of the branches of it, whereby whole nations, under a public profession of Christianity, are through stupid ignorance degenerated into a profane course of life, no less vile than that of the heathens. It is well if it be not so in some measure in other places also. But the truth is, the ignorance of many who take upon them the office of the ministry, and their unconscionable idleness when they have so done, is the great occasion of the continuance of profaneness and ungodliness among the people. And if

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the preaching of the gospel be the only sovereign, effectual means appointed by God for the change of men's natures and the reformation of their lives (a denial whereof includes a renunciation of Christianity), it is a vain expectation that either of them will be wrought in such a way as to restore the beauty and glory of religion in the world, unless provision be made for an able ministry to instruct the body of the people, through all their distributions, in knowledge and understanding.

2. It is the duty of this sort of persons, unto the same end, to *preserve the truth pure and uncorrupted.* Unless this be done carefully and effectually, holiness will not be maintained or preserved in the world. And it is evident how many of them have acquitted themselves herein, as hath been in part declared in the foregoing account of apostasy from the doctrine and truth of the gospel. By them principally it hath been debased, corrupted, perverted, and continueth yet so to be; neither is there at this day scarce any one doctrine that should really promote evangelical obedience which is free from being despised or depraved by some of them. But this is not that which we now speak unto; it hath been done already. Our present inquiry is after that love and care of, that zeal for the truth, which are eminently required of them. Do they pray, and labour, and plead with God and man for its preservation, as that wherein their principal interest doth lie? or do many esteem of it any farther but as their outward advantages are secured by it? A fault there is in this matter, and it is not without the especial guilt of some that the world is come to such an indifferency about the principal truths of the gospel that from thence men slip into atheism every day.

3. Neither are these defects supplied by diligence in their work; yea, the want thereof is of all other evils in this kind most evident. No words are sufficient to express the sloth and negligence, the coldness and carelessness, that are found amongst many in the discharge of their duty, as to the instruction of others, and the application of the word of God to the hearts and consciences of men. I shall not mention particular instances, that none may be offended. The matter itself is evident, and the effects of it manifest. It may seem to some desirable that such things should be concealed, but whilst by reason hereof the souls of multitudes are in danger of eternal ruin every day, those who are sensible of their misery may be allowed to complain. How few, therefore, do diligently and industriously lay out themselves and their strength in the ministry, with zeal for the glory of God and compassion unto the souls of men! How few do take heed to themselves and to the flocks, do watch and pray, and press their message on the consciences of their hearers! Alas! it is but little of saving truth that many know in the notions of it, less they

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care to communicate unto others, because they know it not in its power. Will the souls of men be brought into the obedience of faith, will the power and interest of sin and the world in them be cast down and destroyed, will gospel obedience be preserved in the lives of men, by such weak and languid endeavours as many satisfy themselves withal? If it be so, conversion unto God and the fruits of holiness must be looked on as most easy things, and the ministry itself to be of little use in the world. Certainly, there is another representation of these things in the Scripture; and notwithstanding the growth of some opinions that would render the whole work of Christianity so easy and facile as to be accommodated unto a negligent ministry, yet the event thereof is openly pernicious. Wherefore we need not fear to say, that coldness, lukewarmness, sloth, and negligence, especially when accompanied with ignorance and spiritual darkness about the principal mysteries of the gospel, with an unconcernment of mind and affections in the importance, end, and design of their work, among them who are looked on as the public teachers of the church, at any time or in any place, keeps open a wide door for the lusts of men to pour forth themselves into that deluge of apostasy from the power of godliness which the world is even overwhelmed withal.

So was it with the church under the old testament, as God by the prophets complains in a hundred places. Can any man be so stupid as to imagine that the ordinary discharge of the priestly office in the church of Rome, in saying their offices at canonical hours, hearing of confessions and giving absolutions, without the least dram of labouring in word and doctrine, is a means to keep up the power of Christian religion, or is not an effectual means to drench mankind in sin and security? Neither doth the calling of things by other names change their natures. Wherever there is the same neglect of the true work of the ministry, in the matter of it or manner of its performance, the same event will ensue thereon. And it will be nowhere more fatal than where men love to have it so, and despise whatever is spoken to the contrary, so as that it shall be esteemed a crime for any one to be dissatisfied with the soul-ruining sloth and negligence of this sort of men.

4. Moreover, whereas great relief in all these cases might be taken from a holy, exemplary conversation and walking among them in whom it is required as an ordinance of God for the direction and encouragement of the people, it is manifest in the world, and sufficiently taken notice of, that many of them in their own persons are openly ambitious, insatiably covetous, proud, sensual, haters of them that are good, companions of the worst of men, evidencing the depraved habits of their minds in all signal instances of vice and folly.

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He that shall consider what was the state, what were the lives, of the apostles and first preachers of the gospel, with those who succeeded them for some ages following, not merely as to their outward condition of straits and poverty (which, as it will be pleaded, was occasioned by the state of things then in the world), but as to that humility, lowliness of mind, self-denial, contempt of the world, zeal for God, purity of life, which they prescribed unto others and gave an exemplification of in themselves; and then take a view of that universal contradiction unto them and their ways which the lives and course of very many in the world do at this day openly express; he must conclude that either all those things were needless in them, as to the public interests of Christianity, or that they are unspeakably endamaged by those of some at present.

Wherefore, it cannot with any modesty be denied but that by reason of these and the like miscarriages in the spiritual guides of the people, the generality of Christians have been either led or suffered insensibly to fall into the present apostasy. When God shall be pleased to give unto the people who are called by his name, in a more abundant manner, "pastors after his own heart, to feed them with knowledge and understanding;" when he shall revive and increase a holy, humble, zealous, self-denying, powerful ministry, by a more plentiful effusion of his Spirit from above; then, and not until then, may we hope to see the pristine glory and beauty of our religion restored unto its primitive state and condition.

Those who do yet judge that matters among the common professors of Christianity, as to the obedience of faith, are in as good a posture as they were at any time formerly, or as they need to be, who have no other desire or interest in them but only that they should not be better, may abide in their security without troubling themselves with these things. But for such as cannot but see that a revolt or defection from gospel obedience is not only begun in the world, but carried unto that height that it is ready to issue in idolatry or atheism, it is time for them to consider under whose hand this hath fallen out, and be stirred up to put a stop unto its progress before it be too late. Nor is it to be expected or fancied that there will be a recovery of the people from ungodliness and profaneness, or unto the holy obedience the gospel requireth, until there be such a change wrought in the ministry that the word may be so dispensed and such examples given as may be effectual unto that end. It is to cast the highest contempt on the office itself to imagine that this breach can be otherwise healed; for whereas this declension is fallen out under the conduct of the present ministry and that of the foregoing ages, it is not to be thought that it will be retrieved under the same conduct. And to suppose that it can be done any other way,

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that the world of professed Christians shall be recovered unto holy obedience by any other means but the ministerial dispensation of the word, is to render it a thing altogether useless. Here, then, must begin the cure of that lethargy in sin that the world is fallen into,—namely, in the renovation of a powerful evangelical ministry, or the due discharge of that office by them that are called thereunto or possess the place of it, if ever it be effected unto any purpose in this world.

CHAPTER X.

Other causes and occasions of the decay of holiness.

II. MULTITUDES are led into and countenanced in the ways of sin and profaneness, freely indulging unto their lusts and corrupt affections, by *a false appropriation of justifying names and titles unto them, in ways of sin and wickedness.* This was one principal means of old whereby the Jews were hardened in their impieties and flagitious lives; for when the prophets told them of their sins, and warned them of God's approaching judgments, they opposed that outcry unto their whole ministry, "The temple of the LORD, The temple of the LORD, The temple of the LORD, are these;"—"Say what you please, we are the only posterity of Abraham, the only church of God in the world." This contest they managed with the prophet Jeremiah in an especial manner. Chap. vii., he saith unto them in the name of the Lord, "Amend your ways and your doings, and I will cause you to dwell in this place," verse 3. Their reply and defence is, "The temple of the LORD," etc., verse 4. Whereunto the prophet makes that severe return, verses 9, 10, "Will ye steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and burn incense unto Baal, and walk after other gods whom ye know not, and come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name?"—"Will ye give up yourselves unto all manner of wickedness, and countenance yourselves therein by being a people unto whom the temple and the worship of it are appropriated?" And this, in like manner, was the great prejudice which the Baptist had to contend withal when he came to call them to repentance. Abraham's children they were, and by virtue of that relation had right unto all the privileges of the covenant made with him, whatever they were in themselves, Matt. iii. 9. And it is evident in these examples that the nearer churches or persons are unto an utter forfeiture of all their privileges, and to destruction itself, for their sins, the more ready they are to boast of and support themselves with their outward state, as having nothing else to trust unto. But if men were able to countenance themselves

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in their sins on this pretence against that extraordinary prophetical ministry which endeavoured to discard them of it, and called them unto the necessity of personal holiness, how much more will they be able to shelter themselves under its shades when they shall be taught so to do!

When men who have given up themselves unto a vicious, sensual, worldly course of life, having either fallen into it by the power of their lusts and temptations, or were never brought into a better course by any means of correcting the vices of nature, shall find that notwithstanding what they are, what they know themselves to be, and what judgment others must needs pass of them, yet they are esteemed to belong to the church of Christ, and are made partakers of all the outward privileges of it, it cannot but greatly heighten their security in sin, and weaken the efficacy of all means of their reformation. And when others, not so engaged in the ways of sin and profaneness, shall see that they may have all the external pledges of divine love and favour communicated unto them, although they should run into the same compass of riot and excess with others, it cannot but insensibly weaken their diligence in duty, and render them more pliable subjects of temptations unto sin; for they are but few who care to be better than they judge they must be of necessity. When the church of Sardis was really dead, the principal means of keeping it in that condition was the name it had to be alive.

Let us, therefore, consider how it hath been in the world in this matter. Whilst these things have been communicated promiscuously unto all sorts of men, yea, to the worst that live on the earth, is it not evident that the name of the church and the administration of its ordinances would be made use of to countenance men in a neglect of holiness, yea, a contempt and hatred of it? Whilst these sacred names, titles, and privileges, these pledges of the love of God, and of all the benefits of the mediation of Christ, are forced to lackey after men into the most provoking courses of flagitious sins, what can put a stay to the lusts of men? If the church be that society in the world which is alone the object of God's especial love and grace, if the principal end of the administration of its ordinances be to confirm unto men their interest in the benefits of the mediation of Christ, how can the lusts of men be more accommodated than by the application of these things unto them, whilst they are flagrant in their pursuit? It may, indeed, be supposed that the Lord Jesus Christ hath made evangelical obedience to be the immovable rule of an interest in his church; indeed, whether obedience unto the precepts of the gospel be not the only and indispensable condition of a participation of the privileges of the gospel, ought to be out of dispute with them that own the truth of its doctrine. And whereas

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all that is required of us that we may be eternally saved is contained in the precepts of the gospel, men can have no other outward security of their souls' welfare than what doth accompany the church and its rights. When, therefore, they do find on what easy terms they may hold an indefeasible interest in them, so as that, by a compliance with some outward forms or constitutions, they may secure their right from any impeachment or forfeiture by the most profligate course of life which, for the satisfaction of their lusts, they can betake themselves unto, what remains of outward means that can put a restraint upon them?

This was the engine whereby Satan promoted that general apostasy from evangelical obedience which befell the church of Rome, in all its branches, members and adherents. For after that innumerable multitudes were brought unto the profession of Christianity, not through a conviction and experience of its truth, power, holiness, and necessity unto the present peace and eternal welfare of the souls of men, but in compliance with the rulers of the nations and their own secular interest, being once safely lodged (on most easy and gentle terms) in the church, they were quickly secured from all apprehensions of the necessity of that holiness which the gospel doth require: for being assured that although their lives were worse than those of the heathen; were they never so lewd, filthy, and wicked; did all manner of sins that may be named, or ought [not] to be named, abound among them; yet that they, and they alone, were the church of Christ, and could not be otherwise,—to what purpose should they trouble themselves with mortification, self-denial, purity of heart and hands, and such other ungrateful duties? What ground is there to expect the same course of obedience from them who engage into a profession of Christianity on these terms, with those who in the primitive times embraced the truth in the love of it, for its own sake, with a deliberate resolution to forego all things rather than forsake its profession or decline from its commands?

Especially were men confirmed in their security when they saw others condemned body and soul unto hell, and consumed with fire and sword in this world, for not being what they were,—that is, *the church!* They could not choose but applaud their own happiness, who on such easy terms were certainly freed from present and eternal flames. When hereunto, for the necessary satisfaction of some convictions, the reliefs of confession, penances, commutation, and redemption of sins by outward works of supposed piety or charity, were found out, with the great reserve of purgatory in all dubious cases, the generality of men bade an open farewell unto the holiness of the gospel, as that wherein they were not concerned and wherewith they would not be troubled.

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In these things consisted the mystery of iniquity, the springs and occasions of that great apostasy which was in the world under the Papacy.

1. The *doctrine of the gospel* (as to its peculiar nature, the causes, motives, and ends of it) was generally lost, partly through the horrible ignorance of some, and partly through the pernicious errors of others, whose duty it was to have preserved it. And how impossible it is to maintain the life and power of obedience when this spring of it is dried up or corrupted, when this root is withered and decayed, is not hard to apprehend. Sometimes truth is lost first in a church, and then holiness, and sometimes the decay or hatred of holiness is the cause of the loss of truth; but where either is rejected, the other will not abide, as we have declared. And so it fell out in that fatal apostasy; these evils promoted and furthered each other.

2. The ground got by the loss of truth was secured by the application of *the name, title, privileges, and promises of the church* unto all sorts of men, though living impenitently in their sins; for there was and is virtually contained therein an assurance given unto them that they are in that condition wherein the Lord Christ requires they should be, which he accepts, approves, and hath annexed the promises of the gospel unto. When men are declared to be in this estate, what need they be at any pains or charge to have it changed or bettered? Certainly, in general, they are too much in love with their lusts, sins, and pleasures, to part with them, unless they see a greater necessity for it than such a condition would admit. And for their farther security herein, they were informed that the sacraments of the church did, by virtue of their administration alone, confer unto them all the grace which they do signify. Particularly, they were taught to believe that every one who had a mouth, whatever villanies his heart and life were filled withal, might eat the flesh and drink the blood of Jesus Christ (at least by concomitancy); which himself hath assured us that "whoso doeth hath eternal life," John vi. 53, 54. And other ways almost innumerable there were whereby, through their pretended interest in the church and its privileges, even flagitious sinners were secured of immortality and glory.

3. For the increase of their satisfaction, for the confirming of their security, they found that *hell and destruction were denounced only against them who were not of the church.* For besides one great maxim of truth which passed current amongst them, but [was] falsely applied unto their advantage, namely, that *out of the church there was no salvation,* which church they were; and one also of no less use to them, though of less truth in itself, that *the church was like Noah's ark, all were saved that were in it, and all drowned that were out of it,* with others of an alike encouraging nature; they saw

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the truth of them exemplified before their eyes: for if it so fell out that there were any who did not belong unto the church as they did, nor would comply with it, although they were evidently in their ways and lives more righteous than themselves, they saw them, by the authority of the church, cursed, condemned unto hell, cast into dungeons, and consumed with flames. And herewith they could not but be fully satisfied that there was no fear of danger and trouble, in this world or another, but only in not being of the church; which sin they were resolved not to be guilty of, seeing they could avoid it on so easy terms. And it will be found always true, that as persecutions, with the sufferings of the saints of God, do tend to the brightening of the grace of some, and the confirmation of the faith of others who really believe, so they do greatly unto the obdurateness and impenitency of wicked men in their sins. Never was there a more pernicious engine against the glory of the gospel invented, than for professed Christians to persecute, hurt, and destroy others, in like manner professing Christian religion with themselves, who visibly excel them in a holy, fruitful conversation, because in some things they dissent from them; for what can more secure men in their impieties than to persuade them that they are justified in them by the rule of the gospel, above those who in all duties of morality do really excel them? Certainly, for swearers and drunkards, profane persons and unclean, to persecute such for religion as are visibly pious, sober, temperate, given unto prayer and good works, is no useful representation of Christianity. But,—

4. These privileges and these attestations were not absolutely and always such armour of proof unto sinners, but that some arrows of conviction would ever and anon pierce into their minds and consciences, giving them no small disquietment and trouble. One thing or other, either in some beam of truth from the gospel or from conscience itself, on the occasions of new surprisals into actual sin, or from fear, or an apprehension of some public judgments, would ever and anon befall them, and that unto an inward disturbance beyond what the advantages mentioned could reduce them from; and this was the most likely way of awaking them out of their security, and causing them to inquire what God yet required of them. In this case were the other helps and supplies mentioned found out and proposed unto them. "If it be so that you are not absolutely satisfied with your interest in the advantages of the church in general, if sin will yet give you any disquietment, then *you must to confession, and penances, and works of redemption*, with the like approved medicines and remedies for troubled minds. But if the conscience of any prove so stubborn or inflexible after all these mollifying and suppling medicines, that the wound will not be skinned over, all that is yet want-

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ing shall be well issued and secured in purgatory, wherein it is most certain that never any soul did miscarry."

By these and the like means, the generality of mankind were brought into an utter unconcernment with gospel holiness. They neither understood it, nor found any need of it, nor did like what by any means they might hear of it, until at length a blind devotion, deformed with various superstitions, obtained the reputation of it, the world in the meantime being drenched in ignorance, profaneness, and all manner of wicked conversation. So, under the name of the church and its privileges, were Christ and the gospel almost utterly lost amongst men.

It will not be otherwise where the same principles are entertained, according unto the degrees of their prevalency. And were it not that the minds of men are powerfully influenced with reserves from these things, it were impossible that so many called Christians should in their lives and conversations exceed heathens and Mohammedans in wickedness. The commands of the gospel are most holy, its promises great, and its threatenings most severe; and yet, under a profession of owning them all, men lead lives worse than the heathens, who know nothing of that holy rule, or of those promises and threats of eternal things wherein the highest blessedness and utmost misery of our nature do consist, which these profess to be regulated by.

To suppose really the least countenance to be given hereunto by any thing that belongs unto the gospel, is to exercise against it the highest despite imaginable. This event, therefore, must and doth principally follow on the undue application of the outward tokens of God's favour and pledges of eternal blessedness unto men in their sins, by those unto whom the administration of them is supposed to be committed by Jesus Christ. And let none expect a return of a conversation becoming the gospel among Christians until things are so ordered in the church as that none may flatter themselves with a supposed interest in the promises and privileges of the gospel, who live not in a visible subjection unto and compliance with all the precepts of it. But whilst all things are huddled together promiscuously, and there is no more required to make a Christian than for him to be born in such a place or nation, and not to oppose the customs and usages in religion which are there established, we must be content to bear the evils of that defection which the world groans under.

III. *Great examples of persons exalted in places of eminency* giving up themselves unto boldness in a course of sinning,—which have fallen out in all the latter ages of the church,—have had a signal influence into the increase and furtherance of this apostasy;

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especially they have had so where the persons giving such examples have been such as pretended unto the conduct of religion. See Jer. xxiii. 15. It cannot with any modesty be denied but that the flagitious, scandalous lives of many popes and other great prelates of the court of Rome have hurried many into the very depths of atheism, and countenanced multitudes in a careless, voluptuous, sensual course of life. And if at any time a man whose ways are made conspicuous by the eminency of his employment,—being, as it were, at the head of all the religion that is publicly professed, and having the chief conduct of it in his hand, as it is in the Papacy in many places,—be vain in his communication, profane in his principles, sensual in his course of life, negligent in the duties of his office, no way rebuking open sins, but taking pleasure in them that do them, it is incredible how soon a whole age or generation of professed Christians will be influenced, corrupted, and debauched thereby; for what is the family like to be, when the stewards are such as the evil servant described Matt. xxiv. 48–51? As men are warned every day not to be *wiser* than their teachers, but duly to obey their guides; so they either cannot or will not, for the most part, see any reason why they should be *better* than they, or walk in any other paths than what they tread before them. When the sons of Eli, the sons and successors of the high priest, actually exercising the priests' office in their own persons, gave the people an open example of profaneness and lewdness of life, the body of the nation was quickly so far corrupted as that the judgments of God in the first captivity of the land ensued thereon. The world at present is so precipitate and headstrong in a course of sin, that the best examples are not able in any measure to stem the torrents of it. But if in any place, at any time, encouragements are given unto men by any eminent examples in sinning, helping to remove the remaining curbs of fear, shame, and reputation, impudence in sinning will rise unto an exorbitant and uncontrollable outrage. Hereby, then, hath the defection from holiness complained of been greatly promoted in all ages, for few or none of them have wanted plenty of these examples. Indeed, the first visible degeneracies of Christianity, as they accompanied, so they were occasioned by the open pride, ambition, strife, contentions, and conformity unto the world, that possessed the minds and stained the lives of far the greatest part of the prelates and principal leaders of the church, after it came under the protection of the Roman empire, and men thought to purchase an interest in the good things of religion, or at least a representation of them, by giving power, wealth, and honour, unto persons no way better than themselves, who had got the name and title of the "clergy," or "guides of the church;" for about these things they contended endlessly, to the shame of

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Christian religion, and the utter loss in the most of the true real power and virtue of it. And in following ages, as things grew worse and worse, the lewd and wicked lives of popes, prelates, and others, signalized unto the world by their power and dignity, did by their examples insensibly bring about a public conformity unto their vices, according as the concurrence of opportunity and ability did enable men thereunto. Wherever, therefore, persons fall within the compass of the ministry of the church, or, as guides thereof, are on that account (on what principles soever) exalted into places of eminence or dignity, whereby they are made conspicuous and observable, if they do not proportionably excel others in visible exemplary holiness, at least if they be not unblamable in such a godly conversation as truly expresseth the grace of the gospel, in humility, meekness, contempt of the world, of sensual pleasures, and of the pride of life, zeal and diligence in the dispensation of the word, it cannot be but that apostasy from the gospel, as to its power and holiness, will be kept up and promoted.

IV. This apostasy hath been very much promoted by *persecution*. I mean not that persecution which hath befallen the sincere, constant professors of Christianity from the avowed enemies thereof, upon the account of their profession of it. This is so far from being any cause or occasion of a defection from the holiness of the gospel as that it hath been the peculiar glory of our religion, and a notable outward means of the increase of it. So hath it been with respect unto the whole doctrine of the gospel in general, and so it is with respect unto any especial branch or part of it. It was the primitive glory of Christian religion that it set out in the face of a universal opposition from the whole world, and not only made good its station, but increased under the fiercest persecutions, until it had finished that glorious conquest which it was designed unto. And not only did it preserve its being and enlarge its extent under them, but they were means also to preserve its purity, and to exert its power in the hearts and lives of its professors. The church never lost finally either truth or holiness by the violent persecutions of its avowed enemies. But I speak not of the outrages committed on the flock of Christ by wolves in their own skins, but by such as have got on sheep's clothing; for these things, in whomsoever they are, proceed from the uncured, wolfish nature in persons on whom the gospel hath not obtained its promised efficacy, Isa. xi. 6–9 It is professing Christians persecuting one another, about some differences among themselves concerning their apprehensions of spiritual things and practice of divine worship, that I intend. And this hath been so great, especially in the latter ages of the church, that it is questionable whether there hath not greater effusion of the blood of

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Christians, ruin of families, and devastation of nations, been made by them who have professed the same religion in general, than by all the Pagans in the world since the first promulgation of it. He that shall impartially read the Gospel will not be able to discern how it was possible that any such things should ever fall out among those who pretend to avow it as their rule and guide in any measure; for the whole design and all the rules of it are so expressly contradictory unto any such practice, as that no man who had not learned the contrary from the event could possibly conjecture that any persons could ever fall into it without an antecedent renunciation of the gospel itself. But thus in process of time it did fall out, unto the irreparable scandal and detriment of Christian religion. And that so it would do was foretold; for the principal design of the book of the Revelation is, to foretell and delineate such an apostate state of the church as wherein the external power prevailing in it should persecute, destroy, and kill those who would not comply in the apostasy; for which reason, together with idolatry, that state is called Babylon. And we all know how it came to pass under the power and prevalency of the Roman church. And we may observe, that upon the destruction of Babylon, it is said that "in her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth," Rev. xviii. 24,—that is, for the gospel and the profession thereof. Whoever, therefore, offereth violence unto the life of any on the account of their profession of the gospel and religion of Christ, be it under what pretence it will, he doth therein and so far join himself unto that apostate state which shall be destroyed. Our Lord Jesus Christ came to restore that love of God which was departed from our nature, and thereon that love unto and among mankind which the law of creation originally required, and that advanced unto a higher degree of worth and excellency by an addition of new motives, duties, and ends, unto it. He came to save the lives of men, and not to destroy them,—to deliver them out of a state of enmity and mutual hatred into that of peace and love; and can any sober man imagine that the hurting, imprisoning, fining, banishing, killing, and destroying of men, for no other reason or cause in the world but for believing in Christ, and worshipping of him according as they are invincibly convinced they ought to do, is a good and due representation of this design of Christ? nay, is it not evident that this practice draws a veil over the glory of it, obscuring the principal attractive beauties of the gospel, and teaching the world a Christian religion, fierce, cruel, oppressive, vindictive, bloody, to the utter exclusion of that which is so indeed? There is therefore no more expedient course to draw off the minds of men from the due consideration of one principal end

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of the mediation of Christ (which is to turn them from the gospel, and to substitute another gospel in the room thereof, which yet is not another, because it is none, whatever it pretends), than for those who profess Christian religion to persecute others of the same profession for their profession, pleading this to be a duty of that religion. Wherefore, when the generality of mankind, by what they heard and saw, were persuaded that this was the true religion,—namely, variously to persecute, and at length to destroy others, who professing it did yet in some things dissent from them in power,—they had lost the true gospel and the benefits of it.

Besides, that religion is alien from the gospel, at least includes a notable defection from it, whose avowed profession doth not represent the spirit, graces, and virtues of Him who was its author; yea, conformity unto him in all things is the sum and substance of that obedience which it doth require. But in this way of external force and persecution, there seems to be an appearance of the spirit of Mohammed and Antichrist rather than of our Lord Jesus Christ. And hereby are the minds of men infected with false notions and apprehensions of the nature of Christian religion; which whilst they conform themselves unto, they depart from the glory and power of it. It hath been sufficiently elsewhere evinced how contrary also this practice is to the most plain rules and principal ends of the gospel. And when at any time there is this kind of persecution prevailing among Christians, there is not so much as the form, face, or appearance, of Christianity left amongst men. All that love, charity, peace, meekness, quietness, condescension, mercy, compassion, benignity, towards mankind, which belong essentially unto Christian religion, are forced to give way to wrath, strife, revenge, evil surmises, false accusations, tumults, disorder, force, rapine, and every thing that is evil. Whereas, therefore, this course hath been steered in many places of the world, and yet continueth so to be, the generality of men must needs be much untaught the truth of religion thereby; for that kind of profession thereof which is consistent with such practices is not directed in the least by the gospel. And when the minds of men are hereby unframed, they are unsuited unto all other evangelical duties. Whatever advantages any shall pretend to have by this means accrued unto the truth (as they suppose) in some few instances, yet as none can be so immodest as to deny but that it hath been a thousand times more subservient unto the interests of error, so no pretended advantage of truth can countervail that corruption of Christian morality which hath been introduced and countenanced by it.

V. *Want of watchfulness against the insinuation of national vices* and the prevailing sins of any present age, hath effectually promoted an apostasy from evangelical holiness among the gene-

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rality of Christians. There are some vices, crimes, or sins, that particular nations (on what grounds I shall not now inquire) are peculiarly inclined unto, which therefore abound in them; for it is evident what great advantages those vices must have on the minds of men, and how easy it is to have their practice imposed on them. All men are continually encompassed with them in their occasions, and commonness takes off the sense of their guilt. That which would be looked on in one nation as the greatest debauchery of human nature, is, through custom, in another passed by without any animadversion. Hence the prevalency of the gospel in any nation may be measured by the success it hath against known national sins. If these are not in some good measure subdued by it, if the minds of men be not alienated from them and made watchful against them, if their guilt appear not naked, without the varnish or veil put upon it by commonness or custom, whatever profession is made of the gospel, it is vain and useless. Thus the apostle allows that there were national sins prevalent among the Cretians, Titus i. 12, 13, "One of themselves, a prophet of their own, said, The Cretians are alway liars, evil beasts, slow bellies. This witness is true. Wherefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith." Whatever their profession were, if they were not delivered by the gospel from the power and practice of these national sins which they were so prone unto, they would not long be sound in the faith nor fruitful in obedience. So among the Jews there was a peculiar kind of stubbornness and obstinacy, above any other nation under heaven, which God complaineth of in their successive generations from first to last, and which continueth to be their characteristical evil unto this day. Hence Josiah was eminently commended, "because his heart was tender," 2 Chron. xxxiv. 27. He was not under the power of the common sin of that people, which indeed includes all other evils whatever. It was a rare thing to find one of a tender heart among them.

And we may observe (it being easily demonstrable), that the great apostasy which is at this day among the nations which have received the Christian religion consists in a degeneracy into those customs, manners, humours, and courses of conversation, which were common among them and national before the entrance of Christianity. Set aside an outward profession and formality of worship, and the generality of men in most nations live as they did formerly, and are given up greatly unto those vices which were prevalent among them in their heathenism. A full evidence this is that the power of evangelical truth is lost among them, the efficacy thereof consisting in curing the vices of nature and those evils which men have been most habituated unto, as the prophet at large declares, Isa. xi. 6–9.

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Thus the sin of this nation hath been always esteemed *sensuality of life, in an excess of eating and drinking*, with the consequents thereof. Hereunto of late have been added vanity in apparel, with foolish, light, lascivious modes and dressings therein, and an immodest boldness in conversation among men and women. These are corruptions, which, being borrowed from the neighbour nation, and grafted on crab-stocks of our own, have brought forth the fruit of vanity and pride in abundance. And it is the most manifest evidence of a degenerate people, when they are prone to *naturalize the vices* of other nations among them, but care not to imitate their virtues, if in any kind they do excel. But thus the lust of the eyes and the pride of life are joined unto the lust of the flesh, to give the world, as opposite unto God, a complete interest among us. It may be these things are restrained in some by contrary vices, as covetousness, and an earnest desire or ambition to enrich a family, and leave a name amongst men;—a vanity infused amongst mankind from the great design of the builders of Babel; which was, to "make unto themselves a name," Gen. xi. 4. This is but another way of the exercise of the same sin.

Now, where sins are thus national and common, it is easier for men to preserve themselves from the most raging epidemical disease than from being, in one degree or other, tainted with the infection of them. It is almost inexpressible how efficaciously they will insinuate themselves into the minds and lives of men. They are so beset on every side with the occasions of them and temptations unto them, they offer themselves continually with so many specious pretences, as that there is no security against them but by being encompassed with "the whole armour of God;" a matter that few understand or apply themselves unto. But it is not [possible] on any other grounds or by any other means for single persons to hold out and prevail against a national confederacy in sin; for they who will not say "A confederacy" to them, or in those things wherein a whole people shall say "A confederacy," must be content to be for "signs and wonders," to be despised, and even hooted at, Isa. viii. 11, 12, 18. However, it is apparent that by them the general apostasy we treat of is visibly and openly promoted. Some are engaged in them by a corrupt course of *education*, and some are betrayed into the entrances of them by *sloth, negligence*, and *security;* some lose a sense of their guilt by their *commonness;* some yield to the arguments that are pleaded, if not in their justification, yet in their excuse or for their extenuation. One way or other, multitudes of all sorts are by them turned away from gospel obedience. Hence it is come to pass that Christianity is, as unto customs, manners, vanities, vices, and way of conversation, sunk down into heathenism; or prevalent national sins

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have drowned the power and left little but the outward form of it in the world. And where it is so, the life, substance, and all the real benefits of the gospel, are renounced; for it doth not design only to turn men in their *outward profession* from "dumb idols to serve the living God," to change the form and outward state of religion,—as the Roman missionaries have made conversions of the Indians, giving them new images instead of their old idols, and new saints for their former Zemes,—but to turn men also from "all ungodliness and worldly lusts, to live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world." Where this is not effected, either the gospel never really prevailed among men, or they are fallen away from it. And where men do engage into a profession of religion, disallowing and condemning such national vanities, vices, and customs, if they are publicly countenanced they occasion particular apostasies every day. This is that which, on the one side and the other, hath almost lost the protestant religion in some neighbour nations; for, not being able to hold out against those national vanities and vices which are publicly countenanced, they find no relief unto their minds but in a renunciation of that religion by which they are condemned. And this I look upon as the principal means of that general defection from evangelical holiness which prevails in most nations. The gospel comes upon a nation as on a wilderness or forest that is full of such wood, thorns and briers, as the soil of itself is peculiarly disposed to produce. These it cuts down to the ground, planting good and noble plants in their room, whereby the barren wilderness becomes for a season a fruitful field. But in process of time, if continual care and culture be not used about it, the earth pours out of its own accord the weeds and briers which are natural unto it. These springing up abundantly choke the other plants and useful herbs, whereby the fruitful field is turned again into a wilderness. There needs no more unto this apostasy but that national vices, for a time suppressed by the power of the word, should overgrow the generality of any people, whereby the graces of the gospel will be certainly stifled and choked.

VI. *Mistakes about the beauty and glory of Christian religion* have been no small cause of apostasy from its power and holiness. That it should have a glory, somewhat that might render it honourable in the eyes and esteem of men, was always thought unquestionable; and it is certainly true, provided that we suppose those with whom we have to do have eyes to see that glory, and minds enlightened to make a true judgment of it. In compliance herewithal was religion outwardly figured and represented among the Jews. And as the apostle declares that the worship of God in the administration of the gospel is truly glorious, and eminently so above what was to be found in the administration of the law; so Chris-

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tian religion is in itself truly honourable, and contains in it every thing that is so, in the judgment of God and the rectified reason of mankind. But about the true notion and apprehension of that glory and honour which is proper unto religion and suited unto its nature, men have fallen into many woful mistakes; for whereas it principally consists in the glorious internal operations of the Holy Spirit, renewing our nature, transforming us into the image and likeness of God, with the fruits of his grace in righteousness and true holiness, in a meek, humble, gracious conversation, and the performance of all duties according to the rule, few are able to discern beauty or glory or honour in these things. But yet where there is not an eye to discern them, the gospel must of necessity be despised and abandoned, and somewhat else substituted in the room thereof. This therefore also proved a great furtherance of the general apostasy, and continues an efficacious means of keeping multitudes under the power of it unto this day; for,—

1. Through the loss of *spiritual light* and neglect of the grace of God, things were come to that pass in the world, that those who had the conduct of religion saw no real glory themselves in the things wherein all the glory of the religion taught and appointed in the gospel doth consist. And they are but few that do so at this day. Therefore the profession that is made of them by any is generally looked on as hypocrisy, mixed with a certain kind of superstition, and is accordingly despised; yea, nothing is more contemptible in the world than the possession and profession of those ways which are *truly*, if not *only*, noble. Their view, therefore, being lost in the eyes of the leaders of the church, it could not be expected that they should be instrumental to open the eyes of others, or careful to instruct them how to look after what themselves did not discern.

2. They were fully satisfied that there was in these things *no evidence of glory* unto the eyes of the generality of mankind, whereunto they thought it wisdom to accommodate themselves and the notions of religion. Men naturally can see no more beauty in the spiritual power of Christianity than the Jews could see in the person of Christ when they rejected him, because unto them he made no appearance thereof, Isa. liii. 2. That religion should be set off and represented as truly glorious and honourable in the eyes of men, they thought it incumbent on them to take care; but leaving herein the judgment of God, of Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit, as declared in the Scripture, they accommodated themselves unto the carnal apprehensions of them with whom they had to do, which were also suited unto their own. Wherefore, that this glory of religion consisted in a ministry in the church humble, holy, laborious, eminent in the graces and gifts of the Spirit, looking for no honour or

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he was conquered and triumphed over in the cross of Christ, he shall finally be so in all such attempts. Happy and blessed are they, and shall they be, by whose blood and temporal ruin his power at any time is or shall be broken. So I say it fell out in his first attempt in this way against Christian religion; for through the efficacy of the grace of Christ, and by virtue of the victory obtained against him in his own person, he was overcome by the blood and constancy of innumerable holy souls, until he was cast out of the havens of the world, and an end was put unto his rage. But, in the meantime, whilst this sworn enemy of the church made all this bluster as a lion, and raised all these storms of persecution, which the minds of all the professors of Christianity were intent upon, and generally much fortified against, he was secretly at work as a *serpent* also. Herein he secretly and gradually infected the minds of many with ambition, worldliness, superstition, and a neglect of the power and simplicity of the gospel. That this is his work as a serpent our apostle declares, 2 Cor. xi. 2, 3. And herein sometimes "he transformed himself into an angel of light," as he speaks in that place, verses 14, 15; for he not only poisoned and inflamed the lusts of men, but drew them aside from the gospel by suggestions and pretences of more piety and devotion, or at least of other outward modes and means of their expression, than it did require. So did the "mystery of iniquity" work in the days of the apostles themselves, 2 Thess. ii. 7. He was at work secretly, by ways and means not easy to be discovered, to draw off the minds of men from evangelical truth and holiness, by sowing the seeds of that ambition and superstition which afterward spread themselves over the face of the whole visible church. So was he the spirit which animated the apostasy which by various and insensible degrees prevailed in the following ages. Those who acted in it and promoted it never knew any thing of the design, but added one thing unto another, as occasion was offered, which gave it increase; but in him the projection was designed, and regularly carried on from the beginning. Hence had it the name of "The mystery of iniquity," as being insinuated and promoted by such unsearchable methods or depths of Satan, that those, for the most part, who were subservient to his design, knew not what they did, though sufficiently warned in the Scripture of what he would do and what should come to pass. Wherefore, being disappointed, as was said, in his endeavours by outward force and persecution (as he will ever be), leaving the name, power, and advantage of the church unto them that professed Christianity, he made use of all the darkness, ignorance, errors, ambition, and lusts of men, gradually to draw them from the truth and holiness of the gospel. And he ceased not until he had brought Christian religion to be looked on as made up principally, if not only, of

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those things which by his craft and the lusts of men were introduced into it. So did he pursue his work, almost undiscovered, until the generality of those who professed Christian religion were given up to the power of *sensual lusts* on the one hand, or brought under the power of *superstition* on the other. All this he attempted, and in a great measure effected, of his own accord. But after that men had voluntarily given up themselves unto his delusions, rejecting the truth and holiness of the gospel, as unto their love to them and delight in them, God in his righteous judgment gave them up unto his power, to be infatuated by him, and hardened to their eternal ruin. So the apostle expresseth it, 2 Thess. ii. 11, 12, "For this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie; that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness." Thus was the apostasy completed under the Papacy; and by the same artifices is Satan still at work among us unto the same ends and purposes.

VIII. Moreover, among the occasions of the present decay of holiness and the power of Christianity in the world, we may reckon *the scandal that hath been given by or is justly taken at those who have professed the most strict obedience unto the rules of the gospel.* There is nothing difficult herein but only to choose out the most pregnant instances in the multitudes which offer themselves to evidence this occasion. Nor do I intend such offences as some men will enviously seek after, and sometimes causelessly create, but such as are really given, and offer themselves unto the consideration of all sorts of men. Of these I shall mention two only, which are the most obvious and extensive; and,—

1. Offence hath been taken at *the divisions that have been among them, and continue so to be,* with the management of them in an evil, contentious frame of spirit. The Lord Christ hath declared and appointed that *the mutual love* of his disciples should be the *great testimony of the truth of his doctrine and the sincerity of their obedience* He hath also commanded them to be one in heart, mind, and affection, praying for them also that so they might be. His commands and directions unto this purpose are known unto all who know the gospel, and so need not here to be repeated or insisted on. The blessed effects and fruits of them were eminent for a season among the professors of the gospel, and their mutual love was a convincing argument of the truth, efficacy, and holiness, of the doctrine which they did profess: for where there is oneness and love thereon, there is peace, order, usefulness to mankind, and every good work; whereas the want of them is attended with strife, envy, confusion, disorder, and every evil work whatever. Some divisions, indeed, happened among the primitive Christians, but were quickly healed

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by the spirit of apostolical authority, and that love which was yet prevalent among them. But afterward all things grew worse, and the first visible degeneracy of Christianity consisted in the strifes, divisions, and contentions of its professors, especially of their leaders. And these in no long process of time proceeded unto that excess, and were acted with such an evil spirit of pride, ambition, envy, and malice, that the very heathens made themselves sport with their contentions, and observed that there were no sort of men in the world so ready for them and implacable in them as the Christians of those days were. But when once one or other party of them got into power, and, snatching that sword of force and violence out of the hands of Pagans which had been imbrued in the blood of the holy martyrs, began, in the pursuit of their divisions, to persecute one another (which way carnal men having tasted the sweetness and advantage of, as that which, gratifying their envy, malice, and ambition, doth also, as they suppose, secure all their earthly concerns, they would not forego, nor have so done until it is become the top-stone of many men's religion), it was merely from the unspeakable care and mercy of God that they made not the gospel an abhorrence unto all flesh; for who, not yet endued with that light and grace which might secure him from the power of such temptation, could look on the fierce, devouring, bloody contentions of its professors, and that solely on its own account, and not suppose that itself proceeded from a spirit of malice, strife, and disorder? But the truth and faithfulness of God preserved it against all the oppositions of its adversaries, and in the midst of the treacheries of its avowed friends. Thus was it in the primitive times; which as it was the first considerable stop unto the progress of the gospel, so it was one principal cause of corrupting the conversation of many, filling them with a frame of spirit in all things directly opposite unto that of the gospel. The differences, with their untoward management, which fell out among the first reformers, was the chief means that hindered their work from a universal success.

Is it much otherwise among the strictest sorts of professors at this day? Do not some seem to aim at nothing more than to multiply and increase divisions, and to delight in nothing more than to live and dispute in the flames of them? There is not the least different apprehension of men's minds about any thing in religion, but such persons suppose it a sufficient ground to quarrel and contend about it for ever. By such ways and means scandals are given unto the world in its proneness unto apostasy, and seeking occasions for it or countenance unto it, which is its present posture; for these things are not done in a corner. Men who know nothing of the inward power and virtue of that religion which is in such professors, as it is

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hoped, seeing and observing those other distempers among them, are really alienated from all the good they do profess; and not only so, but do from thence justify and approve themselves in their immorality and profaneness, as those which allow them a better condition than such wranglers can afford them. By this means hath religion lost much of that awful authority in the world whereby it ofttimes put a restraint on the minds and consciences of men who were never acted by its power. What are the rules whereby we ought to walk under the continuance of these differences, and what are the best means to put an issue unto them, I have inquired in a treatise unto that purpose.[1] But it must be acknowledged that for the most part attempts for the rebuking of these distempers, the reconciliation of dissenters, and the uniting of professors, have been managed from such principles and in such a frame of spirit as have heightened and increased rather than allayed or diminished them.

2. Great offence is given to the world by the *uselessness of professors*, and in that they are not, what they ought to be, the common good and blessing of mankind. There is a selfish spirit on many of them, whence, contenting themselves with abstinence from known sins, and the performance of the religious duties of divine worship, they are of little or no use unto others. Some will be kind, benign, helpful, good, in some measure unto other men, but yet will and do give undue bounds and limits unto their actings in this kind. Their own household, and the household of faith, according unto that measure which from opinion or prejudice they take of it, they will alone regard. As for love, condescension, benignity, kindness, readiness to help, assist, and relieve *all mankind*, yea, the *worst of men*, as they have opportunity, they understand them not, yea, have many pretences that they are not required of them. But if we are Christians, it is required of us to "abound in love toward all men," 1 Thess. iii. 12; and our doing good unto all, being useful unto all, exercising loving-kindness in the earth towards all, is the principal way whereby we may express our sincere obedience unto the gospel. One professor that is kind, benign, condescending, charitable, useful, ready to become all things unto all men for their good, brings more glory to the gospel than a hundred who are looked on as those who live too much unto themselves. When the old saying was, "Bonus vir Caius Sejus, sed malus quia Christianus,"—"Such an one is a good man, evil only in this, that he is a Christian," religion did by such convictions insensibly get ground amongst men. If the world cannot see that it hath any advantage by professors, but hath trouble on the other hand by the hatred which it cannot but have of their profession, it is no wonder if it desire to have no more to do with

[1] See vol. xv., in his treatise on Evangelical Love, Peace, and Unity.—Ed.

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them. Did men find that so soon as any gave themselves unto the strictest ways of profession, therewithal they became benign, kind, merciful, charitable, useful, and helpful unto all men, it could not but give an honourable reputation in their minds unto that religion which they do profess; but an observation of a contrary frame and temper in such persons, and of how little use they are in the world, must needs produce contrary effects. By reason of such miscarriages as these, and others of an alike nature, whereby some professors are so far from adorning the gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ as that they cast, what lies in them, a blemish and reproach upon it, others are every day hardened in their alienation from all its concerns.

These few instances have I given of the means and ways whereby a general apostasy from the holy precepts of the gospel, as the rule of our obedience, hath been begun and carried on. Many others of an alike nature might be added unto them; but it is to no purpose to insist long on the nature of a disease when we find it to despise all possible remedies. Sovereign grace yet remaineth, whereunto this state of things is referred.

And this apostasy, in its measure and proportion, partakes of the guilt of that described in the text, which we made the foundation of this discourse: for therein also is Christ "crucified afresh, and put to an open shame;" for,—

1. All persons who profess the Christian religion, and yet are thus fallen off or alienated from its holiness, do really *renounce and forego the commands of Christ*, and those as enlivened by his promises, *for the pleasure and wages of sin*. And herein do they openly declare and avow, as the judgment and resolution of their minds, that there is not that excellency in his precepts, nor that goodness, beauty, desirableness, or satisfaction in obedience unto them, or not that assurance in his promises, or worth in the things promised, as that they ought to be preferred before the course of the world and the pleasures of sin. Hence some commands of the gospel (and those of no small importance unto the furtherance of holy obedience) are neglected and cast from among the generality of Christians. Such are the commands for mutual love, whereof there is scarce any shadow left in the world: for that pretence of it which some seem to rest in and plead for as satisfactory, in the peaceable, and, as they say, loving converse of persons in their civil and ecclesiastical distributions, is no other than what is found among Mohammedans and Pagans on the like occasion; which, as it is good and commendable so far as it proceeds from and is suited unto the light of nature, so it no way answers, either in the kind of it or in its acts and fruits, unto that evangelical love which the Lord Christ requires among his

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disciples. That watchfulness over one another with love, care, and tenderness, those mutual admonitions, exhortations, and consolations, which the gospel so frequently and diligently prescribes unto us, are not only neglected, but so far despised that the very naming of such duties is made a matter of scorn, as a pretence of hypocritical preciseness; and no better entertainment have many other of the commands of Christ among the generality of them that are called Christians. So do many, on all accounts, openly profess in their walkings and conversation that they see no cogent reason why they should comply with him in his commands; and it is not easily to be conceived how they can cast a greater dishonour or contempt upon him.

2. By continuing in the *outward profession of Christianity, they do most falsely represent Christ and the gospel unto the world*, and thereby, what lies in them, "put him to an open shame;" for, pretending to yield obedience unto him, and to place their hope for life and blessedness in him by the gospel, they profess withal that he is a person that will approve of such ways as they walk in, and his gospel a doctrine that gives countenance unto all manner of licentiousness in sin. Who would judge otherwise who had no knowledge of him or it but by the representation that is made of them in the profligate conversation of such apostates? But this argument I have elsewhere insisted on.

CHAPTER XI.

Apostasy from evangelical worship.

THIRDLY, That which was proposed to be considered in the last place is that apostasy which is in the world from *the purity of the worship of the gospel* as appointed by Jesus Christ; and herein principally did consist that great defection foretold by our apostle, 2 Thess. ii. 3–12, which is also prophesied of in the Revelation, and did accordingly come to pass. But because I have insisted on this subject on many other occasions, and some things relating thereunto are under difference and debate among such as are capable of the warning given concerning the apostasy that is in the world, I shall wholly waive the consideration of particulars about which any such differences may be, and only mention such things as the generality of Christians, at least of Protestants, cannot but acknowledge.

I shall take it for granted at present, that our Lord Jesus Christ did institute and appoint a solemn worship of God, to be continued inviolably and unalterably unto the end of the world. And the

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principal end of his appointing, continuing, or preserving any church on the earth, is the celebration of this worship; for herein alone consisteth that public revenue of glory which God requires from believers in this world. All other duties of the gospel may be performed by men in their single capacities, if there were no such thing as a church on the earth. And those churches do exceedingly mistake their duty, and every end of their being, which make it not their principal business to take care of the due celebration of that worship which the Lord Christ hath appointed. He was faithful in the whole house of God, as was Moses, Heb. iii. 5, 6; and if the life, being, happiness, and welfare, of the church of Israel, consisted in and depended on their remembrance of the law of Moses, which "God commanded unto him in Horeb, with the statutes and judgments," Mal. iv. 4, because he was faithful in the house of God as a servant, certainly the being and well-being of the Christian church consist in and depend upon that observing and doing of all whatsoever He hath commanded in the worship of God (as Matt. xxviii. 20) who is faithful as a son in and over the whole house of God.

Besides, it is acknowledged by all,—and we shall, God willing, show the manner of it in our exposition of the seventh chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews,—that the Lord Christ, in and by the gospel, hath altered and abolished all that solemn worship, all those ordinances and institutions, which God himself had set up under the old testament, to continue unto the time of reformation; and hereby he rendered it absolutely unlawful for any one to serve God according unto those institutions. Hereunto God signally set his public seal of approbation in the sight of the world; for no sooner had the Lord Christ, by the promulgation of the gospel, taken away all their authority and obligatory power, so as that his disciples ought not to make use of them any longer, but God immediately, by severe and unparalleled judgments, destroyed the seat and place of them, so that those who would yet never could regularly make use of them unto this day. And shall we think that the Lord Jesus Christ thus took away and abolished the old solemn worship of the church, and substituted none in the room of it? or that he took away that which was erected by the wisdom of God, though but for a season, and left the church, as to its main duty and principal end in this world, unto the inventions and imaginations of men? One of these must be supposed, if it be denied that he hath established a solemn worship of God, to continue unalterably unto the end of the world; and both of them are highly blasphemous. Again, let any, in faith and obedience unto him, practise and attend unto all those parts of divine worship which he hath appointed, and I am persuaded no man will have the confidence to say that there is this or that wanting to ren-

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der it a solemn and acceptable service, however they may contend for the conveniency of some circumstantial additionals. Wherefore I take it for granted at present, that the Lord Jesus Christ hath appointed such a solemn worship under the gospel, which all his disciples are obliged constantly and invariably to observe, as he declares, Matt. xxviii. 20. And with respect hereunto men may fall away and apostatize from the gospel, no less sinfully and fatally than they may fall from the mystery of its doctrine or the holiness of its precepts. And there are two ways whereby this may be done:—1. By *neglecting and refusing to observe and do what he hath appointed;* 2. By *adding appointments* of our own thereunto, inconsistent with and destructive of that which he hath ordained:—

I. In the first way we have some among ourselves who are fallen off from the worship of the gospel. It is true, they will do some things which have an appearance of being what Christ hath commanded; such are their first-day's meeting, and their prayers, with speaking in them;—but they neither observe the Lord's day, nor pray or speak in obedience unto any institution of his. Conveniency and the light within are all the reason and guide which they plead for them. And for the sacraments, or baptism and the supper of the Lord, which are so great a part of the mystical worship of the church, on I know not what fond pretences, they utterly reject them. In like manner they deal with a stated ministry as of Christ's appointment, although they have found out means to set up one of their own.

And because herein also Christ is "put to an open shame," we shall briefly inquire into the grounds and reasons of this defection from the obedience due to his commands:—

1. Now the principal reason, and which compriseth all others, why some men have forsaken the gospel, as unto the administration of its ordinances, is because they are no way suited unto, nor indeed consistent with, that faith and obedience which they have betaken themselves unto; for the ordinances of the gospel are representations of the things which we believe, and means of the conveyance of their efficacy unto us. Unto the confirmation of that faith and our edification therein are they suited, and to nothing else. Now, these persons having fallen, as we have showed, from the faith of the gospel in the mystery of it and the spiritual obedience which it doth require, of what use can the ordinances of worship be unto them? For instance, the ordinance of the Lord's supper is instituted in the remembrance of the death of Christ, of his suffering in our stead, of the sacrifice he made of himself therein, of the atonement or reconciliation with God that he wrought, and of the sealing of the new covenant with his blood. To what end should any man solemnly

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worship God in and by this ordinance who upon the matter believeth none of these things, at least doth not believe them as proposed in the gospel, namely, as the principal causes and springs of life, righteousness, and salvation? Those who believe in God through these things, who find the effects of them upon their souls in righteousness and peace, cannot but delight to be found in the exercise of faith through this ordinance, as they know it to be their duty so to do. But it is apparent that neither this nor the other ordinance of baptism doth contribute any thing to the furtherance, increase, or establishment, of that light within men which upon the matter they resolve their faith and obedience into; yea, they are, in their true and proper notion, as both directing unto the sanctifying and justifying blood of Christ, diametrically opposite thereunto and unto what is ascribed unto it. It is, therefore, so far from being strange that these men should forsake these ordinances of gospel worship, that the admission of them in their true and proper use and signification is destructive of the whole scheme of religion which they have formed unto themselves. Where the faith of the gospel is forsaken, the ordinances of worship must be so too, and so all instituted divine service be neglected, or other things found out that may suit unto the imaginations whereunto men are turned aside.

2. Another reason hereof hath been *want of spiritual light* to see through the veils of outward institutions, and of the *wisdom* of faith, *to obtain communion with God in Christ by them.* Our worship under the gospel is either absolutely spiritual, or that which comes immediately unto what is so. But in these institutions there is somewhat that is outward and sensible, and it is to be feared that many do rest in these outward things, and proceed no farther in the worship of God by them than the actions and words that are used will carry them; but they are, as appointed by Christ, "animæ vehicula," means of leading and conveying the soul unto an intimate communion with God. That they may be so unto us, three things are required:—

(1.) That we submit our souls and consciences unto the *authority of Christ* in these institutions. Unless this be the foundation which we build upon, the whole service will be lost unto us.

(2.) That we rest on *the veracity of Christ* for the working of the grace and accomplishment of the mercy represented in them and sacramentally exhibited by them; for they will not profit them by whom the promises of Christ, virtually contained in them and accompanying of them, are not mixed with faith, and we cannot believe the promise unless we submit to the authority of Christ in the appointment of that whereunto it is annexed.

(3.) That we understand in some measure *the mystical relation*

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that is between the outward symbols of the ordinance and the Lord Christ himself, with his grace represented thereby, wherein the nature, use, and end of the institutions are contained.

And all these are necessary to keep up any delight in them, or a conscientious use of them. Where, therefore, all these are wanting, —as apparently they are in those concerning whom we treat, being none of them either understood, owned, or acknowledged by them, —whereas they have neither spiritual light into the internal nature of these things, nor spiritual gifts for their administration unto edification, following the conduct of their own principles, they could do no otherwise but reject them, and therein fell off from the worship of the gospel, and thereby do reflect dishonour upon the Son of God, the author and Lord of all these institutions.

II. There is another way whereby men may, and many men do fall away, and have for many ages fallen away, from the gospel with respect unto its worship, and that is, by rejecting its simplicity and pure institutions, substituting a superstitious, yea, idolatrous worship of their own in the room thereof, 2 Cor. xi. 3: for whereas there are various degrees of declension from the purity of gospel worship, according as men forsake any part of it, or make any additions of their own unto it, yet at present I shall mention them only by whom it is wholly perverted,—that is, those of the church of Rome; for as they have added unto it rites and institutions of their own in great number, partly superstitious and partly idolatrous, so there is no one ordinance or institution of Christ which they have not corrupted, the most of them so far as utterly to destroy their nature and use. Whereas, therefore, the Lord Jesus Christ doth in the ordinances of gospel worship and the due celebration of them represent his own religion and authority unto the church, to remove them out of the way, and to introduce another fabric of them of another constitution, is to represent Antichrist unto the church, and not Christ, and thereby to "put Christ to an open shame." The ways and means whereby this apostasy was effected, by the craft of Satan and the carnal interest of men, in a long tract of time, I shall not here declare; it shall suffice at present to observe, that as men grew carnal, having lost the spirit, life, and power of the gospel, and so far as they did so, they found it necessary to introduce a carnal, visible, pompous worship, suited unto that inward principle and light whereby they were acted. And as the people in the wilderness, being carnal in their hearts, and accustomed unto carnal ways of worship, upon the absence of Moses in the mount, cried out unto Aaron, "Make us gods, which shall go before us" (that is, gods visibly present), "for as for this Moses, we wot not what is become of him," whereupon they made a calf; so these men, finding the whole fabric of Mosaical

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we think ourselves most remote from it. It is beyond the compass of human reason to take at once a prospect of all the causes and means thereof, with the ways of its efficacy and prevalency. And if at any time we judge ourselves free from an hour of temptation, which comes upon the world to try them that dwell therein, which most are exercised with and many are prevailed on by, so as to be secure and regardless of the means of our preservation, of all men we are in the most danger to be ruined by it. Neither will the best of our resolutions be of any avail without the utmost of our endeavours. The great apostle thought and resolved with respect unto the person of Christ that he would neither deny him nor forsake him, and if this confidence did not betray him into his fall, yet to be sure it did not preserve him from it; and it was upon his own experience that he gave afterward that holy advice, that we should "give a reason of the hope that is in us with meekness and fear," 1 Pet. iii. 14, 15, and "pass the time of our sojourning here in fear," chap. i. 17. The highest present confidences have ever proved the most deceiving presages of future stability. Wherefore, the utmost I design in the ensuing cautions is but to excite men unto a due apprehension of their danger, that they be not surprised into that pernicious security which is the mire wherein this rush doth grow.

1. The consideration of *the extent and almost universality* of this apostasy may be of use unto this purpose. Ignorance, profaneness, worldly-mindedness, with sensuality of life, have obtained the most eminent catholicism in Christendom. The complaint of the prophet is not unsuited to the present state thereof: Isa. i. 4–6, "Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evil-doers, children that are corrupters: they have forsaken the LORD, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward. The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores." Do we hear but of this or that individual person who hath apostatized from a profession of holiness, into a sensual, wicked, worldly course of life, or is turned from the faith into pernicious errors? there is no man that is wise and careful of his eternal concerns, but he will take it as a warning to examine, try, and be careful of himself; and this counsel is laid before us by the apostle, 2 Tim. ii. 17–19. What, then, is required of us when we see nations, churches, multitudes of people, by one means or other, degenerated from that power of godliness which once they professed? If we hear that one or other in a city is visited with the plague, we are not altogether insensible of our own concern and danger, because we know how usual it is for the

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infection of that disease to spread and diffuse itself; but if the whole city be infected, and thousands fall under it every week, there is none so sottish as to need much warning of their danger. And shall we be less concerned for our immortal souls and their eternal condition than we are for these frail carcasses and their continuance for a few days in the world, which, if they escape one distemper, may yet in a few moments fall under the power of another? This spiritual "pestilence," that hath formerly "walked in darkness," is now a "destruction wasting at noonday." Nations are depopulated by it and cities left desolate, as unto their interest in God and the gospel; and is it not high time to "look diligently" lest the infection reach unto us also, lest we also should "fail" and come short "of the grace of God," and be "hardened through the deceitfulness of sin?" As, then, our bodies are of the same natural frame and constitution, as they have in them the same humours, the same kind of animal spirits, as are in those who are infected with the plague, whereby we are obnoxious unto the same infection with them; so there are in our souls and minds the same principles of sin and love of the world as are infected, drawn away, enticed, excited, and enraged, by outward occasions and temptations, until they have issued in apostasy. Do we think that we shall be always easily preserved, and that whilst we are careless and secure, from that torrent which hath carried away such multitudes before it? Are we in ourselves better than they, or any of them? Have we a patent for our preservation, whilst we neglect any ways, means, or diligence that the rule requireth thereunto? Doth not God show unto us, not one, but many churches and nations, saying, "Go unto those Shilohs where I some time placed my name, and see what is become of them, and what I have done unto them? Will ye go after them? have ye a mind to be made like unto them? Think not to say within yourselves, 'We have Abraham to our father; we have those outward privileges and advantages which they had not:' for they also enjoyed the same until they had forfeited them by their apostasy." Certainly the general prevalency of this evil proclaims such a danger as no wise man, no man that takes care of his own salvation, ought or indeed can neglect. Wherefore, as it is always with Christians, if ever it be, a time to watch, to stand on our guard, to take unto ourselves the whole armour of God, to be jealous of ourselves, to be constant and diligent in the use of all means, both private and public, for our preservation, it is now a time so to be. And if professors will not be awakened; if they will not stir up themselves with the gifts and graces which they have received; if they will please themselves that all is well with them, and is likely so to be; if they will yet immix themselves with boldness and confidence in the ways of the world;

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—oh that my head were a fountain of tears! oh that my soul could mourn in secret for them! seeing assuredly they will not be able to stand in that day of temptation which is come upon the face of the earth, to try them that dwell therein. The outward court is long since given to be trodden down by the Gentiles, and how soon the enemies may roar in the very sanctuaries, and set up their banners for tokens, we know not; for,—

2. *The present state of this defection hath a dangerous aspect.* Physicians say, "Nemo moritur in declinatione morbi,"—"No man dies in the declension of his disease;" and when a public pestilential distemper is in its wane or decay, the danger is esteemed in a great measure over. But whilst a disease is yet growing and daily spreading its contagion, whilst the bills of mortality are every week increased, they are only hardened and profligate persons whom the commonness of the judgment renders regardless and senseless of it. And it is no otherwise with the evil complained of at this day. There is almost nothing in the world that all sober men do generally agree in but this alone, that the whole world doth daily wax worse and worse. Who can give an instance of the decrease or abatement of any one sin in its love or practice? but that some are advanced to higher degrees of confidence in their perpetration than former days or ages afford us any precedent of, every one can declare. What instances have we of a spiritual recovery from any of our decays? What attempts unto that purpose are made by any, unless by such as are not of consideration, as have not advantages to enable them to effect any thing therein? The world is highly at variance about religion, managing its differences with great animosities and industry, how one way, party, and profession, may draw persons from other ways and professions. The sole business of the church of Rome is, by all manner of artifices to win over men unto their communion; that is, a subjection of their souls, consciences, and entire interests here and for eternity, to the authority of the pope. Others bestir themselves as well as they are able to keep what they have, and to rescue men from their seductions;—and although they have the advantage of the truth on their side, and for the most part the advantage of abilities in the management of their cause, yet they visibly lose ground every day; and where one is recovered from the Roman interest, many are added unto it. And there can be no reason assigned hereof, but only that the apostasy is upon its increase, this being one way of it. Half that pains would have formerly turned a whole city from Popery which will not now succeed unto the preservation of one person. But, in the meantime, both in one profession and another, all sorts of men continue regardless of gospel holiness and obedience; and whilst they quarrel about the outward form, the inward power of godliness lies neglected. Do we see things

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anywhere in the world upon a recovery, or any thriving design for the retrieval of holiness? The name and thing are growing more and more into contempt. What instance can be given wherein this apostasy from the gospel doth or may exert itself,—be it in atheism, be it in Popery, in hatred of and scoffing at the mysteries of evangelical truth, in worldliness, profaneness, vanity, and sensuality of life, in the coldness of love and barrenness among professors,—that is not openly in its progress? And is this a time to be secure, careless, or negligent? Are we sure that this epidemical infection shall not enter our habitations? Do we not find how it hath, one way or other, attempted us already? Can we find no decay in zeal or love among ourselves, no adherence unto the world unsuited unto our present state and condition in it, no neglect of duties, no rareness in divine visitations, no want of life and delight in spiritual communion with Christ, no hurtful growth of carnal wisdom, with all its attendants? or have we not found ourselves, one way or other, sensibly attacked by these evils? It is to be feared that those who can make no observation of any thing of this nature among themselves are somewhat sick of the Laodicean distemper. And if we will not be awakened and stirred up to a more than ordinary diligence, care, and watchfulness, at such a season as this is, it is to be feared that ere long the generality of professors will come to be in the condition of the church of Sardis,—to have a name to live, but indeed and in the sight of Christ to be dead.

3. As this apostasy is yet in its *progress*, so what will be its *event*, what it will rise unto, is altogether uncertain. God can put a stop unto it when he pleaseth, as he hath in his holy purposes fixed bounds unto it which it shall not pass; but in the meantime, being greatly provoked by the ingratitude of a wicked world, no man knows how long he may suspend those more powerful influences and more extraordinary effects of his word and Spirit which are needful unto the healing of the nations, and without which they will not be cured. I hope for better things and pray for better things; but I have no certain ground of assurance that this apostasy shall not grow until, in one instance or other of it, it swallow up all visible profession. The whole world, so far as I know (I mean these parts of it), may become papal again, or be so corrupted in their principles and profane in their lives as that it is no great matter what their profession in religion be. Two things I do know or believe,—namely, (1.) That "the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his." His elect, that truly fear him and diligently serve him, shall be preserved from perishing eternally, and from every thing that necessarily leads thereunto. (2.) That God hath appointed a time and season wherein he will not only put a stop unto this defection

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from the gospel, but an end also. He will one day execute the vengeance that he hath written and recorded on the throne, power, and kingdom of the antichristian apostasy, and in one day shall the plagues of Babylon come upon her; and he will again "turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call on the name of the LORD, to serve him with one consent," Zeph. iii. 9. He will again revive the beauty of his worship, and the glory of holiness in the earth; but, in the meantime, what things may come unto I know not. Those who pretend to a clearer inspection into future things may not do amiss strictly to examine the grounds whereon they proceed; for many have been made ashamed of their predictions, that within such or such a time the yoke of Babylon should be broken. This is all I say (and I say it only for myself), I know no assurance that can be given on infallible grounds that the apostasy which we are treating of shall not one way or other, in one instance or other, become again to be catholic, and prevail against all open, visible profession of the purity and power of gospel worship and holiness. Now, if this be not so unto others, yet unto myself it ought to be a warning how I may be thought worthy to escape, and to stand before the Son of man. And I am sure there is so much danger of it at least as to deserve the consideration of all who take care of their eternal salvation; for if things should come to such a pass, they are not many, they are but very few, who will be entirely preserved. The most will, one way or other, suffer loss; and it is not an easy thing to be found among the number of the few in such a season. Can we think that men careless in holy duties, cold in zeal, lukewarm in love, barren in good works, cleaving to the world and conformable unto it, low in their light, dubious in their state, useless in the world, fearful of trials, will be of this number? They are wofully deceived who are pleased with such apprehensions. Other principles, other ways, courses, and practices, will be required in them who shall be hidden and safeguarded in that day.

4. The *various ways whereby this defection prevails in the world* should also warn us to stand upon our guard. Were it of one sort only, did it work only one way, or make use of one engine alone for its progress, the evil and danger of it might be the more easily either withstood or avoided; but as we have before referred it unto three general heads,—with respect unto the doctrine, the holiness, and the worship of the gospel,—so under each of them there are various ways and means whereby it is promoted. The infection from this plague is taken innumerable ways, Heb. xii. 1. Some take it in their shops or especial vocations; some in their societies, civil and ecclesiastical; some from the vanities and pleasures, some from the profits and advantages, of the world. Unbelief, the deceitfulness of sin, corrupt lusts

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and affections, spiritual sloth, cares about and love of riches, lie all in a readiness to give entertainment to and to embrace any opportunity, advantage, or means, whatever it be, whereby this apostasy may be admitted and take place in them. See Heb. iii. 12, 13, xii. 15–17. Satan, in the meantime, labours by his insinuations to corrupt our minds, to poison our lusts, and to supply them with all inveigling or provoking objects, 2 Cor. xi. 3; 1 Pet. v. 8. In this state of things, look how many public temptations there are in the world, so many general ways and means are there whereby this apostasy doth prevail; and who can reckon up these temptations? Hence it is that men fall under this evil in such various ways, and unto such various degrees. Some do so by errors and "damnable heresies, denying the Lord that bought them;" some by superstition and idolatry; some by a contempt of gospel mysteries, and preferring another way of duty before evangelical obedience; some by ambition and pride of life; some by love of the world, and a neglect of duties spiritual and moral, under a deceiving profession; some by suffering carnal wisdom and some sensual lusts to devour their convictions and their efficacy; some by the uncertainty of their minds, brought to an indifferency in all things supernatural and divine; some by vain-glory and shame to be found among the scorned society of those who are truly religious; and multitudes are initiated into an irrecoverable profaneness by the vain pomps and spectacles of the age. And other ways there are, more than can be recounted, whereby this evil is propagated, and men fall under the power of it. By this means the very common air we breathe in is infected, 1 Cor. xv. 33. Snakes are in all grass whereon we tread, and scorpions under every stone. Snares are laid for us on every hand, and those (some of them) so gilded and set off, that multitudes of loose professors have taken them up and wear them as their ornaments. Those who escape one evil do every day fall into others. And how shall they escape who are encompassed with so many dangers, if they live in the neglect of any one duty or means of their preservation that God hath appointed and made useful thereunto?

5. Consider that *there is an apostasy which is irrecoverable*, and it will end in *eternal ruin*. This is that which we are taught in this context, according unto the exposition before given of it. No man in this world can be, by the rule of the gospel, in an unsalvable condition,—that is, be concluded under an unavoidable destruction by any known rule of the revealed will of God,—unless it be an apostate. There are also several sorts and degrees of apostasy that may have several causes and effects, and so various events. Great surprisals, strong temptations, negligence in watching against the deceitfulness of sin, may produce temporary abnegations of Christ and the

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gospel, woful declensions from the due observation of his commands, with wandering into foolish opinions, and yet persons may be recovered from them all, and brought by repentance unto salvation. Signal instances of this grace and patience in God might be given. And this is sufficient to render the despair of them causeless who are ever awakened in this world [in] time enough to endeavour a deliverance from any sin, or course of sinning, provoking and destructive; for when any man is by any means called to have any thing to do with God about his eternal concernments, God doth not allow him to be the absolutely sovereign judge of himself, which would usurp his prerogative and put the sinner in the place of God. He that despairs says, "I am in the stead of God to myself in this matter. There is neither goodness, nor grace, nor mercy in him, but what I can comprehend." And this evil God hath obviated in signal instances of the recovery of great apostates. But yet withal there is, as we have showed, an apostasy that is irrecoverable; and hereof God permits many examples in this world, to put an awe not only on bold and presumptuous, but also on careless and negligent sinners: for whereas our apostle doth expressly twice mind the Hebrews of this severity of God against apostates, in this place and in chap. x. 26, 27, in the one he doth it with respect unto unprofitableness under the means of grace, and in the other with respect unto a negligence in attending unto the administration of gospel ordinances. Now, whereas any men may be overtaken with the beginning of decays and declensions from the holiness and worship of the gospel, all which have a tendency in their own nature unto this irrecoverable apostasy, ought they not to be continually jealous over themselves, lest they should pass the bounds God hath fixed unto his patience and grace? Ought we not to be careful about every sin or omission of duty that hath a tendency unto this doleful issue? For this very end, that we may be warned to take heed of the beginning of apostasy, doth the apostle in this place declare the end of it. The reader may, if he please (to help him herein), consult our discourses on chap. iv. 3.[1] It is not an easy task to stop a course in backsliding when once it is entered into. And I shall close this warning with naming two directions unto this purpose:—(1.) Take heed of a course in any sin. Though every sin doth not immediately tend unto final apostasy, yet a course in any sin continued doth so. (2.) Take heed of touching on such especial sins as have a peculiar tendency thereunto; and of what nature they are hath been declared.

6. Our last consideration of this kind shall be taken from *the nature and guilt of this sin*, wherever it be found, with the severity of God against it; and we may look upon it as it is total, such as that

[1] See the author's Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews.—Ed.

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supposed by the apostle, Heb. vi. 4–6. The exposition we have given of the words will warrant us to conclude that total apostasy from the gospel once professed is a greater sin, and of a more heinous nature, than that of the Jews in crucifying the Lord Christ in the days of his flesh. This was sufficiently proved in the exposition of the words. It remains only that we do briefly inquire what doth concur unto such a total apostasy, whereby the truth of the exposition and the necessity of the warnings given will be made yet more evident. And though I shall speak with especial respect unto total apostasy from all profession, yet are the things that shall be spoken to be found, in their degree and measure, in all those who are guilty of that partial defection which we have described. There are, therefore, always found in this great offence the things ensuing:—

(1.) *The loss of all taste of any goodness or excellency in the gospel*, in the truth or state of its profession and worship. There is no man who hath ever made a profession of the gospel in earnest, beyond pretence and custom, but he hath found some kind of taste, relish, or sweetness, in the things of it. They "taste of the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come." Either in the things themselves, or in the manner of their dispensation, or of the duties of worship enjoined therein, they have found somewhat that hath given their minds and consciences some satisfaction. A man cannot go into a pleasant garden in the spring but he will smell some savour from the flowers, though he gather not one of them. A man cannot take meat savoury and well condited into his mouth but he will taste the relish of it, though he have no mind nor appetite to eat it; nor can any man walk in the sun but he will have some impressions from its heat. It is so, it can be no otherwise, with them who live under the preaching of the gospel and make profession of its doctrine. More or less it will insinuate itself into their minds with a taste of its excellency and goodness. This in the case considered is lost in the first place; and generally it comes to pass by a love of sin and the pleasures of the world. When this hath filled and possessed the soul, all its senses grow dead unto spiritual things, it hath no faculty or ability to taste any relish in them, yea, it loathes and abhors them as contrary to what it hath immersed itself in or given up itself unto. This usually is lost in the first place. Such persons find nothing any longer in Christ or the gospel for which they should either delight in them or desire them. And it seems to be thus with so many in the world who once gave hopes of better things, that the consideration of it is dreadful.

(2.) This is quickly followed with *a loss of all prevailing evidence and conviction of the truth of the very doctrine of the gospel.* This conviction all are supposed to have who profess it, and all really have

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it who profess it in any sincerity. Why else do they make profession of it, if they assent not unto its truth upon its conviction and evidence? for we speak not at all of them whose profession hath no other principle or foundation but custom or education. Others build their persuasion upon grounds and evidences prevalent to obtain their assent unto the truth against temptations and objections. This apostates lose in the next place. The truth remains what it was, and so do the arguments and evidences of it; but they have no longer any force upon or authority in their minds. It may be they do not presently renounce the gospel as a lie or "a cunningly-devised fable;" they may let the notions of it lie loose in their minds for a season neglected and unregarded, but give them no part of that entertainment which is due unto acknowledged truths of that nature, nor do they receive any impressions from its authority. And when men have lost these, they have lost their assent to the truth of the gospel upon its proper evidence, and are directly unbelievers; and this on every occasion will issue in a formal renunciation of the truth of the whole. And when men arrive unto this posture in their minds, they will discover themselves, as by a conversation wholly regardless of the precepts of Christ, so also by light, irreverent expressions concerning the Scripture; which, where they have freedom, will be poured out from the abundance of their hearts. This step towards total apostasy will follow that foregoing. When once men have lost all taste and relish of the goodness and excellency of the word of God on their hearts and affections, they will not long retain any prevalent evidence of its truth in their minds. Hence,—

(3.) *A contempt of the things promised in the gospel doth ensue.* The promises of the gospel do indeed contain those things wherein the evident blessedness and happiness of our nature doth consist. Such are serenity of mind in this world, and eternal felicity in the enjoyment of God. These, for the substance of them, mankind cannot despise until they grow atheistically brutish; but they may, and many do so, in the manner and on the terms of their proposal and declaration by the promises of the gospel. That this enjoyment of God, wherein everlasting happiness consisteth, must be in and through Jesus Christ alone; that the way of attaining thereunto, and the only means of present peace and serenity of mind, is by faith and obedience in and unto him,—this they despise and contemn. This naturally follows on the former; for all expectation of good by and from the promises of the gospel depends on the evidence that we have of the truth thereof, and when that is lost, these will be despised. Now, herein consisteth one of the greatest aggravations of this sin; for whereas men cannot but desire the things (for the substance of them) which are promised in the gospel, as those wherein

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their blessedness doth consist, they will, out of hatred to Jesus Christ, reject and despise them, and eternally deprive their souls of them, rather than accept of them in and through him. They will rather never have any interest in God than have it by Christ. This rejection, therefore, of the promises of the gospel, as those which either as to the matter of them are not to be desired, or as to the truth of them not to be trusted, is the most provoking sin. No greater reproach can possibly be cast on Jesus Christ, as that which leaveth him the honour neither of his truth nor power, neither of which the Jews could in the least impeach when they took away his life. And,—

(4.) *They choose some other way or means in the place and stead of Christ and the gospel, for the ends which they once sought after by them.* So did those persons who fell off to Judaism. They looked for that in the law and ceremonies which they could not find in the gospel. And of these there are two sorts:—[1.] Such as retain their first end in general, but reject the gospel from being a sufficient means for attaining it; [2.] Some that renounce the whole end itself, and seek for satisfaction other ways. The former are such as preserve an aim in general to worship God, to do that in religion which may be accepted by him, and to believe that of him which is right; but they reject the gospel as an insufficient and deceitful guide in and about these things. And this is done either totally, by such as apostatize to Judaism or Mohammedanism; or partially, by such as turn off from the purity, truth, spirituality, and mystery of the gospel unto Popery, or the like. I say not this with an intention to charge the guilt of this whole sin on this latter sort; only I say, they share in a very considerable part of it, and without repentance will do so in the punishment due unto it. And this casts the scorn of folly on Christ and the gospel; both absolutely, as having neither truth nor efficacy sufficient for the end proposed by them; and comparatively, that a falsehood or lie, a diabolical invention or delusion, is to be preferred before them;—which is the highest provocation unto the eyes of God's glory. The latter sort quite cast off the general end of pleasing God and living unto him. For a while they thought that this would have brought them in some considerable satisfaction, and used the gospel to that end and purpose; but now being fallen under the power of the former degrees of apostasy, in contempt of the gospel, as that which will not afford any tolerable answer unto their expectations, they take up in the lusts and pleasures of the world, preferring them before all the promises of Christ, and despising all the threatenings denounced against those that pursue them. And of this sort of apostates we have numberless examples in the world.

(5.) Hereunto is added *a perfect hatred and contempt of such*

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as abide constant in their adherence unto and profession of the gospel. Constant observation hath approved the saying, "Apostata est osor sui ordinis;" great apostates have been always great persecutors, in word or deed, according to their power. As those who love Christ do love all that are his, because they are his, so they that hate him do hate all that are his, because they are his; and their hatred, because it is against the whole kind, acts itself every way possible. They despise them as weak and foolish for adhering and trusting to the things which they have relinquished, trusting to themselves, their reason, and gallantry of spirit. They are filled with revenge against them, as those who censure, judge, and condemn them as guilty of the highest villany and most desperate wickedness. They know in their hearts that they have reserves against them, as persons whom their Lord will one day judge and destroy; which makes them design, if it were possible, their utter extirpation from the face of the earth. Those who crucified Christ in his own person did it but once, and could do so no more. These do so every day; for what is done unto any of his, for his sake, he esteemeth as done unto himself: "Why persecutest thou me?"

(6.) Those persons who proceed thus far do always fall into *a peculiar contempt of the Spirit of God,* and his whole work in the dispensation of the gospel. The promise of the dispensation of the Spirit is the especial privilege and glory of the gospel. He is sent and given in an especial manner by Jesus Christ as exalted. His whole work is to glorify and exalt Jesus Christ, and to make his mediation effectual unto the souls of men; and in the things which concern him and his work lies the life and soul of the gospel. Hence those who apostatize from it have a peculiar enmity against him and his work; and this usually is one of the first things wherein the fatal backslidings of men do manifest themselves. When once men "tread under foot the Son of God, and count the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing," as they do in the former instances, they will assuredly "do despite unto the Spirit of grace," Heb. x. 29. How this is done in particular shall be considered on that place, if God will, and we live thereunto. Under this head and degree the sin of apostasy becomes formally irremissible.

(7.) *An open profession of a detestation of the gospel,* so far as it is consistent with their worldly interests and advantages, completes the soul-ruining sin we treat of. It may be they may live in such times and places as that it would be to their secular disadvantage openly to avow their renunciation of Christ; but when that is the only curb from the declaration of themselves, the frame of their minds is esteemed for a full profession of their apostasy.

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Now, whereas all these things, and it may be sundry others, do concur unto this sin of apostasy, I shall conclude two things concerning it:—1. That it is *a far greater sin* than that of the generality of the Jews who crucified Jesus Christ in the days of his flesh, as was before asserted. 2. That it is inconsistent with the holiness, righteousness, honour, and faithfulness of God, *to renew such persons as are fully and openly guilty hereof unto repentance.* Repentance may be given unto them in hell with as much advantage unto the glory of God; for when men, after trial and experiment, with some convictions of its truth and excellency, do obstinately reject the only remedy and relief that God hath provided for sinners, and therein do despite unto the whole blessed Trinity, and each person thereof in his peculiar interest in the dispensation and application of grace, God neither in his faithfulness will, nor in his holiness can, have any thing more to do with such presumptuous sinners in a way of mercy. He may and doth endure them for a while in this world, and that without any visible tokens of his indignation, satisfying his justice in the spiritual judgments that are upon them; but it is only as "vessels of wrath fitted to destruction," and such "whose damnation slumbereth not." And these things may suffice to warn men of the danger of this evil; and they will be warnings unto all who shall consider them, who are not hardened through the deceitfulness of sin; and all the judgments of God, which are either impendent over or already inflicted on a wicked, apostatizing world, are calls from heaven unto a consideration of them.

Now, although the generality of men seem to be secure enough from any trouble or discomposure in their minds from the consideration of things of this nature, yet some there are who may by their own misapprehensions fall under such discouragements as may hinder them in that course of obedience which they would pursue. I shall therefore divert a little, to prevent or remove the objections which such persons make against themselves, and from whence their discouragement doth arise, adding some directions suited unto their state or condition; for,—

First, Some may suppose themselves so far interested in the backsliding and apostasy described, as that the threatening denounced in the text doth belong unto them also, and that they are now *judicially* shut up under impenitency; for they say that they had attained unto a greater measure or degree of holiness, unto more readiness, evenness, and constancy in the duties of obedience, than they do now retain. They have fearfully and wofully fallen off from a better frame, into deadness, barrenness, neglect of duties, and it may be in some instance into a sinful course, and that for many days. Hence now they fear, lest as they are sensible that they have forsaken God and

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gone off from him, so he should forsake them utterly, and they should be sealed up under impenitency.

Ans. As this case too often falls out, so it is often answered, and I shall not therefore much insist upon it, nor any otherwise but as our present design and discourse is concerned therein. And I say,—

1. It is to be granted that all such backslidings are not only evil and sinful, but *dangerous* also, as to the issue and event. Whoever, therefore, find themselves under the power of them, or any way overtaken by them, ought not only to consider the guilt of all the particular sins and omissions of duties which they contract, but principally the whole state of their souls, and the danger they are in of being "hardened through the deceitfulness of sin:" for no man in such a state can have the least spiritual assurance or security that he shall not fall totally and finally from God; and whatever persuasion he hath of that nature, it is but a deceiving presumption that will effectually promote his apostasy and ruin, for there is no word of truth, no promise of God, to assure any of his love and favour whilst they are in such a state. It is therefore unquestionably the duty of every one who is sensible of any evil of this nature, in the frame of his heart or course of his life, to give himself no rest therein, seeing the eternal welfare of his soul is highly in question. But,—

2. There is a decay, a falling away from the degrees of holiness and obedience that men may have attained, and that, it may be, for a long season, and possibly with respect unto some especial sin, which is recoverable, and which doth not cast persons under the power of it absolutely into the threatening here recorded. What circumstances are required hereunto and what aggravations of sin have been showed in the opening of the words. Now, there may be a falling away, and that great and dangerous, which yet riseth not up unto the provocation of the evil here in an especial manner intended. And I judge it may be given as a safe rule in general, that he who is spiritually sensible of the evil of his backsliding is unquestionably in a recoverable condition; and some may be so who are not yet sensible thereof, so long as they are capable of being made so by convictions. No man is past hopes of salvation until he is past all possibility of repentance; and no man is past all possibility of repentance until he be absolutely hardened against all gospel convictions. Wherefore there is a recoverable backsliding: for,— (1.) Christ calleth men unto such a recovery, which, therefore, he approves of, and will assist them therein who conscientiously apply themselves unto their duty, Rev. ii. 5, iii. 1–3; which latter instance is great in this kind. (2.) God hath promised to recover and heal such backslidings in believers, Hos. xiv. 4. And unto whom this is

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not encouragement sufficient to endeavour a recovery of themselves, it is to be feared they will wax worse and worse through the power of sin, until it hath full dominion over them; yea, what pretences soever they make to keep themselves off from such endeavours, it is either unbelief or the love of sin that is the sole proper cause thereof. Wherefore,—

(3.) If the backsliding whereof men complain from the ways of holiness and obedience have not proceeded *out of dislike unto Christ* and the gospel; if they have not, by the power and deceit wherewith they are accompanied, *chosen any other way* of duty or sin in his stead,—as there is all necessity imaginable that they should, so there is all encouragement necessary to put them upon the diligent use of all means of a blessed recovery. Suppose their decays have befallen them, or that they have fallen into them, through the power of temptations, the deceitfulness of sin joining with their own sloth and negligence,—which is the highest supposition that can be made in this kind,—yet if they shall say in their hearts that they "will return to their former husband, for then it was better with them than now," they had peace and much refreshment in their first ways of faith and obedience, which they will therefore return unto; as the Lord Christ calls upon them so to do, so he is ready in all the promises of the gospel to receive them upon their so doing. Only let such persons remember that the command is urgent on them, as on Lot when he was to flee out of Sodom, and the angel said unto him, "Escape for thy life; look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain; escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed." There is no time of deliberation, much less of delay in this matter. It is for their souls, and the present moment wherein they are warned is the only season for their escape; and if any shall yet linger as Lot did, the Lord lay hold upon them, and bring them forth by the power of his grace, that they may be delivered! What are the ways whereby this may be done, what duties such persons are with diligence to attend unto, what means they are to use, are not things which at present fall under our consideration. All that I design is, to show that those who thus complain are not cast under any discouragement by this context and its exposition from an endeavour of a recovery, wherein they will find acceptance with God.

Secondly, It may be alleged that, as to the issue of things, it will be all one whether we *fall* from gospel holiness or can never *attain* unto it;—"And this," say some, "is our condition; for whatever we have thought of ourselves, or whatever others have thought of us upon our profession, yet we now find by experience that we have not attained the holiness which the gospel requires." For their corruptions (they say, this or that, it may be, in particular) are too strong for their con-

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victions; and after they thought themselves above them, they have again been prevailed on and overcome. They find the power of one or other lust grown so habitual unto them that they fall again and again under the power of it, until, it may be, they have lost much of the sense of its guilt and more of their power to resist it. And it must be acknowledged, also, that this condition is spiritually dangerous, and such as, if deliverance be not obtained from [it], will probably end in total apostasy. To state things aright in this case, we may observe:—

1. That there are *three degrees* in the power and prevalency of sin, and it must be inquired under which of them they are supposed to be concerning whom this complaint is made. The first is that mentioned Rom. vii. 23, "I see a law in my members warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin." Where this is only, or *the captivating power of sin*, there are two things to be considered:—(1.) That the will, in its dispositions and inclinations, is constantly fixed against the power and interest of sin, so that in all its prevalency it suffers hardship, and is sensible of its captivity. (2.) That this captivity unto the law of sin doth not reach unto the outward perpetration of sin, but only the conflict that is in the mind and affections about it. And this is a condition which no man in this world is absolutely freed from, but is in some measure or other exercised with it, even as the apostle himself was, and thereon groaned for deliverance, verse 24. Another degree of the prevalence of sin is expressed chap. vi. 16, 19, "Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?" There is *a state and prevalence of sin* wherein men, being wholly under its dominion, do give up themselves unto its service willingly, notwithstanding any checks from light or conscience they meet withal. And such as these, the willing servants of sin, that yield up themselves in their affections and members of their bodies unto the obedience and service of it, we do not at present consider. Between these there is a degree of the prevalence of sin, beyond the first, yet falling short of the latter, expressed 2 Pet. ii. 19. Men are therein in some sense "servants of corruption," in that they are "overcome" by it and "brought into bondage." They are not such as willingly, without any contest or conflict, give up themselves unto the service of sin, but they are overcome by it, which manifests that they do in some measure strive against it. And, on the other hand, they go beyond them who complain they are led captives to the law of sin; for they are said to become "servants of corruption," which the others are not in any sense. These, therefore, seem to be such (and such I do intend) who, notwithstanding all

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their light and convictions, with all the endeavours that they use, are so far under the power of some prevalent habitual lust as to serve it in a frequent reiteration of actual sins.

2. If this be the case complained of, it is acknowledged to be a condition *of no small hazard and danger*. And he who is not deeply sensible hereof is "as he that lieth down in the midst of the sea, or as he that lieth upon the top of a mast;" as this state is at large described with respect unto them who are given to wine, Prov. xxiii. 29–35. Wherefore, unless some remedy be found out in this case, it must be acknowledged that it will deprive men of or keep them from any assured interest in gospel holiness.

I must not here divert to consider in general the nature and means of the mortification of sin; I have done it already in other discourses, with the best directions for that end which I am able to propose. Unto them I do refer the persons concerned for guidance and counsel, where better is not at hand. Unto what hath been so treated already I shall only add, that those who would secure an interest in gospel holiness, by a deliverance from the power of inveterate habitual corruptions, may take the ensuing directions:—

First, If they have in vain attempted their own deliverance, let them not delay to acquaint some *able spiritual guide* with their state and condition. This sometimes hath broken, defeated, and scattered at once the forces of sin in the soul, where in its own wisdom and strength it was no way able to conflict with it. And it is the ordinance of God to this purpose: James v. 16, "Confess your faults one to another," etc. It was no small effect of the craft of Satan so to abuse this ordinance of God by turning it into a necessary confession of all sin unto a priest, invested with power of absolution, which was attended with innumerable evils, and proved an effectual engine for the ruin of the souls of men, to keep them off from that benefit which the due use of it was designed to administer unto sinners. If, therefore, any have found that sin hath been and yet is too strong for them, and that that is come upon them which the wise man mentions, "Woe to him that is alone," let them address themselves for advice unto such as have "the tongue of the learned," to speak a word in season unto them that are weary and ready to faint, and they will find relief. God will discover that evil of this kind which men will hide to their own disadvantage. He will lay open those festered wounds which men would cover until rottenness enter into their bones.

Secondly, The *effect* aimed at will never be accomplished without violence offered unto ourselves as unto all occasions of sin,—namely, as to the *particular corruption* supposed prevalent. In this case, when known occasions of the excitation or acting of the evil com-

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plained of do occur, no deliberations, or inclinations, or civil compliances are once to be admitted. Violence and sudden execution of foretaken resolves, without any parley or debate, are to be pursued. This is the condition wherein our Saviour's advice must take place, if we intend to escape, namely, of "plucking out a right eye, and cutting off a right hand," Matt. v. 29, 30; which cannot be done without offering violence unto our affections and inclinations. This is the meaning of the counsel given, Prov. iv. 14, 15, "Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men. Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away." The multiplication of the expressions wherein the duty charged doth consist doth intimate that, in the obedience required in this particular, a resolution acted with a holy violence is required. And there are three things in this holy violence with respect unto the occasions of a prevalent corruption:—

1. The mind's rejection of their *first solicitations*. When such seasons do befall or are befalling any man as wherein his lust or sin hath wonted to act itself, they smile on one another and are ready to shake hands in folly, Ps. l. 18; Prov. xxiii. 31; and sundry things will present themselves unto the mind to render the occasion necessary, or at least not dangerous. But if all insinuations of that kind be not immediately rejected without parley or delay, the soul probably will be again entangled and overcome.

2. A *stated satisfaction concerning the folly of reserves*, although the occasion should be complied withal or embraced, so as that the mind will hear no more of them, under any pretence whatever. Such reserves will offer themselves, as that although a man proceed so far or so far in the gratification of his present inclinations, yet he will put a stop unto or avoid what they may lead unto. When the mind is fully possessed [aware] of the deceitfulness of the heart in this matter, it will see its own folly in listening after such false promises or reserves, and reject the first thought of them with indignation.

3. *Local mutation*, or avoiding the place itself, or society and company, with a holy force put upon the affections, where such occasions are offered. This is that which is so expressed and pressed on us in the place before mentioned, Prov. iv. 14, 15.

These things belong unto that holy violence which men are to use unto themselves, and must use, if ever they intend to be freed from the power of an habitually prevalent corruption; and those who judge their deliverance not to be worth this watchfulness and care will live and die under the power of sin.

Thirdly, *Constancy in private prayer* against the power of such a corruption. This is all the way a man hath to deal with God about such an evil; for such things are to be thought and spoken, such

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circumstances to be insisted on, and such pleas to be used, as are not meet to be communicated to or with others. And, for the most part, it will be found that constant, earnest, faithful, private prayer, and any strong corruption, will be like Moses and Amalek. When Moses' hands were down Amalek prevailed, but when they were lifted up Israel had the upper-hand. And if a man engage into especial prayer in opposition unto any sin or corruption, whatever he thinks of his own resolutions, whatever confidence he hath in his purposes, as he begins to fail or faint in the constancy or fervency of that duty, so his sin gets strength in him, and will not fail to attempt him successfully on the next occasion; nor will the utmost effect of any man's wisdom, or care, or ability, work out his deliverance in this case, without a conscientious attendance unto and discharge of this duty.

Sundry other things of an alike nature unto these might be insisted on, but that I must not too far digress from my principal design. This I thought meet to interpose for the direction of such as may be kept off from a successful endeavour to "perfect holiness in the fear of God."

CHAPTER XIII.

Directions to avoid the power of a prevailing apostasy.

UNTO the warnings given in the precedent chapter some directions may be added, perhaps not unuseful unto them who would be preserved from the occasions, causes, and danger, of the apostasy thus far inquired into; for although, as hath been declared, a watchful attendance unto all gospel duties, and a vigorous exercise of all gospel graces in general, are required unto our preservation, yet there are some things which have an especial respect unto the present state of the causes and circumstances of the evil insisted on, which ought in an especial manner to be remembered. And that things of this nature are by many despised is no argument why we should not be diligent in our attendance unto them; for if they are such things as the Scripture prescribeth in the like cases, the contempt of them proceeds only from that pride and security which are no small part of the apostasy complained of.

Our first direction of this kind is, that *we should all labour for a true, real sense of the concernment of the glory of God in this matter*, and what is our duty with respect thereunto. Where this is not, men are under the power of that security which is the broad way and wide gate leading unto apostasy; yea, where this is not the first

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and principal thing wherewith we are affected in any evil that falls out in the world, our hearts are not upright in what we profess.

When God threatened to disinherit the Israelites and destroy the whole congregation as one man, in the wilderness, because of their provoking rebellion, that wherewith Moses, in all the circumstances of his relation unto them and interest in them, was affected withal, was the concernment of the glory and name of God therein, Num. xiv. 11–19. And it was so with Joshua in the sin and punishment of the same people. "What wilt thou do," saith he, "unto thy great name?" chap. vii. 8, 9; words which have been made a public derision in the days wherein we live.

We cannot but have thoughts about these things, for they are the common subject of many men's discourse: but if our thoughts about them are confined unto a narrow compass, and, so that it be well with us and some few others in whom we are peculiarly concerned, the evil that is come on the world in other places is lightly set by; if we are sensible of no interest of the glory of God, of the honour of Christ and the gospel therein, or are regardless of them,—we are scarce likely to be delivered from that fatal issue whereunto all these things are in an open tendency.

Is it nothing unto us that *so many nations* in the world, where the profession of the gospel and an avowed subjection of soul and conscience unto Jesus Christ did flourish for some ages, are now utterly overrun with Mohammedanism, paganism, and atheism? Do we suppose these things are fallen out by chance, or come to pass by a fatal revolution of affairs, such as all things in this world are obnoxious unto? Did ever any nation or people under heaven lose the gospel as unto its profession, who did not first reject it as unto its power, purity, and obedience? And is not the glory of God, is not the honour of Christ, peculiarly concerned herein?

Is it nothing unto us that innumerable souls, who yet continue to make an *outward profession* of the name of Christ, have so degenerated from the mystery, holiness, and worship of the gospel, as to provoke the holy God to give them up for so many generations unto the most *woful bondage* and *slavery* that ever any of the children of men were cast under from the foundation of the world, without the least hopes or appearance of relief? And is it not to be bewailed that, such is the power of that apostasy which brought all this evil upon them, as that they have not to this day accepted of the punishment of their sins, nor been bettered by all that they have undergone? And doth not that holy name whereby we are called suffer in these things? Is it not on their account evil spoken of? for do not the miseries, the long-continued, woful calamities and oppressions of innumerable multitudes of great nations, outwardly profess-

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ing the Christian religion, become a snare to the world and a temptation against the truth of the gospel and the power of Jesus Christ? The Jews themselves are not left unto more distresses, nor are more destitute of any pledges of divine protection, nor are more unreformed under their miseries, than many who are called Christians, upon the account of their apostasy from the gospel. It is true, great distresses and sore persecutions may befall the church in its best state and condition, but then God doth so dispose of all things as that their trials shall evidently tend both unto his own glory and their spiritual advantage who are exercised with them; and in the issue the gospel itself shall never be a loser by the suffering of its sincere professors. But in those horrible judgments which have befallen many parts of the apostatized Christian world, nothing offereth itself unto our minds but what is matter of lamentation and temptation.

Is it nothing to us that the greatest number of those who are *called Christians*, and enjoy prosperity in the world, do live in *open idolatry*, to the unspeakable scandal of Christian religion and imminent danger unto themselves of eternal ruin?—nothing that so many do openly renounce the humble, meek spirit of Christ and the gospel, endeavouring to persecute, ruin, and destroy other Christians, perhaps better than themselves, because they cannot captivate their souls and consciences in obedience unto their impositions?—nothing to see and hear of all those dreadful effects of this apostasy in all manner of outrageous sins that the world is filled withal?

Certainly, if we are not greatly affected with these things, if our souls mourn not in secret about them, if we are not solicitous about the small remainders of the interest of truth and holiness in the world, we are in no small danger ourselves of being, one time or other, carried away with the deluge.

If we are sensible of the concernment of the glory of God in these things, it may not be amiss to consider what is our duty with respect thereunto.

1. And the first thing required of us is, that *we mourn in secret* for that sad issue which the profession of Christianity is come unto in the world. God puts an especial mark on them who mourn for the prevalency of sin and the apostasy of the church in any season, Ezek. ix. 4; neither will he have regard unto any others when he comes to execute judgments on ungodly apostates. Men may *suffer* with them with whom they will not *sin;* for where we are unconcerned for the sins of men we shall not be so in their sufferings. It is therefore those alone who, out of a sense of the dishonour of God, and compassion towards the souls of perishing sinners, do sigh and cry over these abominations, that shall be either preserved from those public calamities wherein they may issue, or be comfortably

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supported under them. And there is nothing of a more ominous presage that things are yet waxing worse, than that general regardlessness about them that is among the best of us. Whose "eyes run down with waters because men keep not the law?" Who doth sufficiently bewail the decays of faith, truth, and holiness, that are in the earth? Most men, like Gallio, either "care for none of these things," or at best design to save their own houses in the general conflagration. Many measure all things by their own advantage, and can see nothing amiss in the profession of religion but only in the complaints that any things are so. And although the degeneracy of Christianity, in the present professors of it, be grown a common theme in the mouths of most, yet very few are affected with it in a due manner in their hearts.

2. It is in this state of things required of us to *pray continually*, pleading those promises which are recorded in the word of God for the restoration of the pristine glory, power, and purity of Christian religion. This was the way and means whereby the church was recovered of old, and the same duty is still enjoined unto us, Isa. lxii. 6, 7; and hereunto are all our present hopes reduced. There is nothing too hard for God. If he will work herein, none shall let him. Things are not gone beyond his cure. He can send peace, and truth, and righteousness from above, and cause them to prevail on the earth. Were all things left absolutely unto the wills of men, in that depraved state whereunto they are arrived in the world, nothing but an increase of overspreading abominations might be expected. Sovereign and effectual grace can yet give relief, and nothing else can so do. Truly in vain is salvation hoped for from the hills and the multitude of mountains; truly in the Lord our God is the salvation of Israel;—but for all these will God be sought unto. And constancy in this duty for others, out of a deep sense of the concernment of the glory of God and zeal for the honour of the gospel, is the most effectual means of our own deliverance and preservation.

3. *Constancy in our testimony* against the prevalency of this apostasy is required of us. And hereof there are two parts:—(1.) An *open, avowed profession* of and contending for the faith and truth of the gospel. The public contempt and scorn that is by a prevalent vogue cast on some important evangelical truths is ready to discourage many from the owning and profession of them. Men, for the most part, have so many things to take into consideration before they will undertake the defence of the truth that they can find no season for it, whilst noisome errors are vented every day with confidence and diligence. It is therefore now, if ever, a time for all those in whose hearts are the ways of God to "contend ear-

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nestly for the faith once delivered unto the saints." And if either sloth, or self-love, or carnal fears, or earthly, ambitious designs, do betray any into a neglect of their duty in this matter, it will at one time or other give them disquietment and trouble. But, (2.) *Exemplary holiness, righteousness, and fruitfulness in good works*, belong unto this testimony against the prevalent apostasy which is required of us. As this is our constant duty at all times, so the progress of the fatal evil complained of renders the doubling of our diligence herein at present necessary, and puts a lustre on it.

Secondly, Those who would be preserved in such a season must *keep a due and careful watch over their own hearts* with respect unto their duty and danger: for although temptations do abound, and those attended with all sorts of circumstances increasing their efficacy, and the outward means and causes of this evil are multiplied, yet the beginnings of all men's spiritual declensions are in their own hearts and spirits; for the different effects that these things have upon the minds and lives of men is principally from themselves. As they are careful, diligent, and watchful over themselves in a way of duty on the one hand, or slothful, careless, negligent on the other, so are they preserved or prevailed against. The advice, therefore, I intend is that given by the Holy Ghost in this case: Prov. iv. 23, "Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life;" or, as it is emphatically expressed in the original, "Above all keeping, keep thy heart." The greatest exercise of men in the world is about keeping what they have, what they esteem their own; wherewith the desire of adding unto it is of the same nature. What belongeth hereunto, what care, what watchfulness, what diligence, what exercise of their utmost wisdom and industry, all men know, unless it be such as by the power of their lusts are given up unto prodigality and profuseness. But the care and diligence in keeping of our hearts (the Holy Ghost being judge) ought to exceed whatever of that kind is employed about other things; and it is too evident that there is much want of this wisdom amongst us in the world. Of all things, the least diligence is used by many in keeping of their hearts. So they can safeguard their other concerns, the heart may be left to take its own course: yea, the heart is never so much neglected usually, nor more lost, than in the use it is put unto in keeping other things; for whilst it is employed to keep our lives, to keep the world and the things of it, it is lost itself in worldliness, covetousness, carnal wisdom, negligence of holy duties, and barrenness in the fruits of righteousness. That this is no good bargain, that nothing is got hereby, yea, that all will be lost by it at last, heart and world, and every thing wherein we are concerned, the Holy Ghost plainly intimates in this direction, wherein we are commanded above all

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things to keep our hearts. And we are not only laid under this command, but a cogent reason is added to enforce our obedience: "For out of it are the issues of life." Hereon do all events depend. The heart being kept, the whole course of our life here will be according unto the mind of God, and the end of it will be the enjoyment of him hereafter. This being neglected, life will be lost, both here as unto obedience, and hereafter as unto glory. This, therefore, is that which in the first place is to be applied unto the present case. Would any not be overtaken with the power and prevalency of any of the causes of apostasy mentioned before, let them look well unto their own hearts, seeing that from thence are the issues of life.

By the "heart" the Scripture understandeth all the faculties of our souls, as they are an entire rational principle of all moral and spiritual operations; and so do we also. The preservation of them in their due order, acting in all things according unto their distinct powers, and the duty of the whole soul with respect unto God, is that which is intended by this keeping of the heart. And hereunto, with reference unto the present duty, sundry things do belong in an especial manner; as,—

1. That *the heart be kept awake and attentive unto its own deceitfulness.* The wise man tells us that "he that trusteth in his own heart is a fool," Prov. xxviii. 26. The beginning of all security,—which is an assured entrance into all evil,—lies in men's leaving their hearts unto themselves and trusting in them. He is no wise man (the Holy Ghost being judge) who, after so many instructions and warnings given us in the Scripture of the deceitfulness of our hearts, or the deceitfulness of that sin which is bound up in them (which is all one), will carelessly trust it with his eternal concernments. The apostle Peter did so once, upon a strong confidence that his heart would not fail him; but we know what was the issue of it. It is apt to be so with most men in this matter. They think, and do really judge, that if all men should fall off and forsake the gospel, either wholly or as unto the degrees in obedience which they have attained, yet they would not so do; but all things are filled with visible examples of their disappointment. There are no apostates but once thought they would not be so; for we speak only of them who had light into and conviction of their duty, and who had therefore necessarily resolutions to continue therein. Wherefore, a constant, watchful jealousy over our own hearts, as to their deceitfulness, their readiness to be imposed on, and secret pretences to countenance themselves in compliance with temptations, is the foundation of all other duties necessary unto our preservation.

Even this also is by some despised. They know of no deceitfulness in their own hearts, nor think there is any such thing in the

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hearts of others. They cannot but acknowledge that there is mutual deceit enough amongst mankind in the world; but that there should be deceit and treachery in men's hearts with respect unto themselves, their own actions, duties, and ways, with respect unto God and their own eternal condition, that they cannot apprehend: for what or whom should a man trust unto, if he may not safely repose his confidence in his own heart that it will be always true unto its spiritual and eternal interest? Happy men, were such apprehensions as these to be the rule of their present duty or future judgment! But is it not possible there may be in the hearts of men a blind self-love, so far predominant as practically to impose false apprehensions and notions of things upon the mind and affections with respect unto sin and duty? Is there no disorder in the faculties of our souls, nor confusion in their operations thereon? Are there no remainders of sin inseparable from them in this life, accompanied with all manner of spiritual deceitfulness? no corrupt reasonings for the procrastination of the most important duties? no inclinations unto undue precedences and presumptions? no vanity or uncertainty in the mind? Or can these things, with the like innumerable, be supposed without any deceit in them or accompanying of them? What one said of old to the Druids,—

"Solis nosse Deos et cœli Numina vobis
Aut solis nescire datum,"——

may be applied unto the men of this persuasion: either they alone know the state of the heart of man with respect unto God, evangelical obedience, and their own eternal interest, or they alone are ignorant thereof. Until, therefore, we have more satisfaction in this novel pretended discovery, we dare not cease the pressing of men to be diligently attentive unto the deceits of their own hearts. If this be neglected, we shall labour in vain, whatever else we do. Blessed is he who thus feareth always! This will make men carefully and conscientiously avoid all occasions of all things, whether in their inward frames or outward practice, that may on any account have a tendency unto a declension from the gospel. A bold, hazardous, careless frame of spirit, venturing on all companies and temptations, complying with vanities and profane communications, offering itself with a fearless confidence unto ways of seduction, through "the cunning sleights of men that lie in wait to deceive," is that which hath ruined innumerable professors. Self-distrust, humility, fear of offending, with the like soul-preserving graces, will be kept up unto exercise only where men are awake unto the consideration of the deceitfulness of their own hearts.

2. We must keep *our heart awake and attentive unto its help and relief;* and this lies only in Christ Jesus, the captain of our

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salvation. After all Peter's confidence, it was the interposition of Christ alone that preserved him from utter ruin: "I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not." And if any can once prevail so far as to deter men from looking for all spiritual help and relief from Christ, for daily supplies of grace and strength from him alone; from a continual application unto him for directing, assisting, preserving, establishing grace (which they variously attempt),—there is no need to fear but they will easily follow them into whatever else either they, or Satan, or the world shall have a mind to draw them. But in all our discourses we proceed on other principles. We look on Jesus Christ as the spring and fountain of all grace, as him who alone is able to preserve us in faith and obedience, and doth communicate supplies of effectual grace unto believers for that purpose. Unto him, therefore, are we to make our applications continually, by faith and prayer, for our preservation, as we are directed, Heb. iv. 15, 16. It is he alone who can "keep us from the hour of temptation, which is come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth," Rev. iii. 10. Whosoever, therefore, would be kept from the power of the temptations unto apostasy which every way encompass us, and threaten to bear down all before them, let them keep their hearts continually attentive unto their only help and relief. Those who have not taken in a sense of their danger will see little reason to concern themselves in these directions. But as for such as are affected with the visible ruin of multitudes and their own apparent hazard, from prevailing causes and innumerable occasions thereof,—whose eyes are in any measure opened to see the general inclination that is in the world unto a relinquishment of all the principal concerns of the gospel, and by what various ways that inclination is furthered, followed, and pursued,—they will not think it unneedful to be minded of a help and refuge whereunto they may betake themselves and be preserved.

3. Let the heart be kept *attentive unto its own frames*, its progress or decay in holiness. How secret, and even ofttimes imperceptible, the beginnings of spiritual declension are in many, with the reasons and causes thereof, hath been declared in our exposition of Heb. iv. 12, 13, whither the reader is referred. I shall here only offer, that he who, in such a season as that which is passing over us, doth not often call himself unto an account how things stand with him as to the inner man,—what is the state of his spiritual life, whether his faith and love do thrive or decay, whether God or the world gets ground in his affections,—will be exposed unto more dangers than it may be he is readily able to deliver himself from. These things are all of them useful, yea, needful unto the course of our obedience at all times. That which is here intended is, their exercise and dis-

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charge with respect unto the evil and danger under consideration. When we have done the utmost of our duty, we shall have cause to rejoice in the grace of God if we are preserved and delivered. But if we be found slothful, negligent, and secure, what hopes can we have that we shall withstand the evil that doth on every side beset us? There is not any way of fraud or force wherein we either are not or may not be assaulted. The secret ways whereby this apostasy puts forth its efficacy are so various as not to be enumerated. The current, furthered by the winds of all sorts of temptations, lies strongly against us. New accessions are made unto it every day. New pretences against the truths and holiness of the gospel are sought out and made use of. By some they are secretly undermined, by others openly despised; and the hand of Satan is in all these things. If we should now neglect a watchful care over our own hearts, and a diligent attendance unto all means of their preservation in soundness of doctrine and holiness of life, what assurance can we have that we shall finally escape?

Having premised these directions in general, those which ensue must have a particular respect unto some of the especial ways and means whereby this declension hath been carried on and promoted, peculiarly such as the present age and season are most obnoxious unto. And because this discourse is drawn forth to a length beyond my first design, I shall name a few things only, to intimate of what sort those directions are which might be more largely insisted on; and two only shall be named. Wherefore,—

Thirdly, *Take heed of resting in or trusting unto the outward privileges of the church*, and a participation of the dispensation of the ordinances of the gospel therein. It is known what various apprehensions as to the especial ways of outward solemn worship and the state of the church there are among all sorts of men. But whereas all men do approve of and adhere unto one church-state or other, one way of worship or other, I intend no one more than another in particular, but would speak unto all with respect unto that way which themselves do approve and practise. And it was before declared how greatly the world was deluded by a pretence of them. And we may not think to excuse the necessity of watchfulness in this matter, because all the good things of the church and all the ordinances of the gospel were then abused, corrupted, and defiled, whereas we now all of us, in our own apprehensions, enjoy their administration in purity, according unto the institution of Christ; for they are all of them no less liable to be abused in this kind when duly administered than when most corrupted: yea, in some cases they are more apt so to be, seeing there is a greater appearance of reason why we should place our confidence in them.

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It is indeed an especial mercy for any to be intrusted with the privileges of the church and institutions of the gospel; yea, it is the greatest outward dignity and pre-eminence that any can be advanced unto in this world, however by the most it be lightly set by. Theodosius, one of the greatest emperors that ever were in the world, affirmed that he esteemed his being a member of the church a greater dignity than his imperial crown. And although the ruin of the Jews arose principally from their carnal confidence in their spiritual or church privileges, yet the apostle doth acknowledge that they had great pre-eminence and advantage, and might have had great profit thereby, Rom. iii. 1, 2, ix. 4, 5. And theirs must be granted more excellent in every kind who enjoy that administration of holy things in comparison wherewith that committed unto the Jews had neither beauty nor glory, 2 Cor. iii. 10. By whomsoever, therefore, these things are despised or neglected, under whatever pretences they countenance themselves, they are utter strangers unto gospel holiness; for what holiness can there be where men live in an open disobedience unto the commands of Christ, and in a neglect of the use of those means which he hath appointed to beget and preserve it in our souls? Nothing, therefore, must be spoken to take off from the excellency, dignity, and necessity, of the privileges and ordinances of the church, when we would call off men from placing that confidence in them which may tend unto their disadvantage. And if persons can find no medium between rejecting all the ordinances of the gospel and trusting unto the outward performance or celebration of them, they have nothing but their own darkness, pride, and unbelief, to ascribe the ruin of their souls unto.

Again; there is not any thing in the whole course of our obedience wherein the continual exercise of faith and spiritual wisdom, with diligence and watchfulness, is more indispensably required than it is unto the due use and improvement of gospel privileges and ordinances; for there is no other part of our duty whereon our giving glory to God and the eternal concern of our own souls do more eminently depend. And he is a spiritually thriving Christian who knows how duly to improve gospel institutions of worship, and doth so accordingly; for they are the only ordinary outward means whereby the Lord Christ communicates of his grace unto us, and whereby we immediately return love, praise, thanks, and obedience unto him; in which spiritual intercourse the actings of our spiritual life principally do consist, and whereon, by consequence, its growth doth depend. It is therefore certain that our growth or decay in holiness, our steadfastness in or apostasy from profession, are greatly influenced by the use or abuse of these privileges.

That, therefore, which, in compliance with my present design, I

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intend, is only a warning that we do not rest in these things, the name, title, privilege, and outward observance of them, seeing so many have thereby been deluded into security and apostasy. Some there are (and of them not a few) all whose religion consists in going to church, and abiding there during the celebration of that sort of worship which they approve of. Herewith they satisfy their consciences as unto all that they have to do with God, especially if they are admitted unto a participation of the sacraments in the appointed seasons. And many others, it is to be feared, content themselves with a bare hearing of the word, and do treat their consciences into a quietness and security thereby. It were otherwise impossible that, among so great multitudes as crowd after the preaching of the word, so few should be brought over unto sincere and universal obedience. But I intend those in particular who make a profession of giving themselves up unto gospel obedience, and are thereon made partakers of all gospel privileges according to the rule. Let them take heed that they do not too much rest in nor too much trust unto these outward things, for so they may do sundry ways unto their disadvantage.

1. Men may herein deceive themselves by *spiritual gifts*, which may be reckoned in the first place among the privileges of the church. Some rest in the gifts of others, and the satisfaction they receive thereby; for by the use and exercise of them men's affections may be greatly moved, as also temporary faith and evanid joy be greatly excited. These things, it is to be feared, some live upon, without farther care after a spring of living water in themselves. Others may rest in their own gifts, their light, knowledge, ability to pray or speak of the things of God. But it is the design of the apostle, in the context before insisted on, to declare that the most eminent spiritual gifts, with all their effects, either in the souls or lives of them who are made partakers of them, or in the church for edification, will not secure any persons from total apostasy. So also some shall be utterly rejected at the last day, who were able to plead their prophesying and casting out of devils in the name of Christ, and that in his name they had done "many wonderful works," Matt. vii. 22, 23. And therefore, when his disciples (who were true but as yet weak believers) were greatly affected, and it may be lifted up, with the success they had had in casting out of devils in his name, he recalls them from any confidence therein, as unto their eternal concernment, unto a trust in God's free electing grace, with the fruits thereof, Luke x. 20; and the reason hereof is, because these gifts have no inseparable relation unto any of the especial and peculiar causes of salvation. That which seemeth to be of any difficulty is, that they are an especial fruit of the mediation of Christ, purchased by his

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death, given into his power upon his resurrection, and first communicated on his ascension. But all that followeth from hence is, that they are good and holy in themselves, and designed unto good and holy ends or uses,—namely, the confirmation of the gospel and edification of the church. But it doth not thence follow that they are saving unto them that do receive them, unless they are accompanied with especial grace towards them and holy obedience in them; from both which they are separable. It is therefore greatly incumbent on all those who have received of these spiritual gifts to take care they be enlivened and acted by especial grace; for if they are not careful, they will give them a pretence and apprehension of what they have not, and set a greater lustre upon what they have than it doth deserve;—for in their actings, because the objects of them are spiritual and heavenly things, the same with that of especial grace, men are apt to suppose that grace is exercised when it may be far from them; and as to the profession that men make, these gifts will set it off with such beauty as shall render it very acceptable unto others and very well-pleasing unto themselves. Both these tend evidently unto the ruin of the souls of men, if not wisely managed and improved. Wherefore, by the way, to help us unto a right judgment in this matter, we may observe one certain difference between the operations of spiritual gifts which are solitarily so on the one hand, and saving grace on the other. Gifts have their especial works, which they are confined unto, according as their especial nature is. In them they act vigorously; out of them they influence not the soul at all. But the work of saving grace is universal, equally respecting all times, occasions, seasons, and duties; and although it may be acted more eminently at one time than another, in one instance of duty than another, yet it enliveneth and disposeth the heart alike unto all obedience. But of the difference that is between spiritual gifts and saving grace, as also concerning their whole nature and use, I shall, God assisting, treat at large in another discourse.[1] At present I intend only this caution, that men countenance not themselves by them, nor resolve a peace (or rather security) into their exercise, under real spiritual decays of grace and obedience.

2. Too high an estimation of any *peculiar way of worship* is apt to entice the minds of some into a hurtful confidence in these things. Having an apprehension that they alone have attained unto the right way of gospel worship and the administration of its ordinances, and that, perhaps, on such accounts as wherein they are eminently deceived, they begin first greatly to value themselves, and then to despise all others, and, if they can, to persecute them. This insen-

[1] In his Discourse on Spiritual Gifts, vol. iv., which was not published till 1693, ten years after the death of the author.—Ed.

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sibly works them into a trust in that which they esteem so excellent, and that unto an open neglect of things of a greater weight and moment. Thus is it not unusual to see persons who are under the power of some singular opinion and practice in religion to make one thing almost their whole business, the measure of other things and persons, the rule of communion and of all sincere love;—to value and esteem themselves and others according unto their embracing or not embracing of that opinion. There is here something of that which God complains of in the prophet, Isa. lxv. 5. And it were to be wished that such principles and practices were not visibly accompanied with a decay of love, humility, meekness, self-diffidence, condescension, and zeal in other things, seeing where it is so, let men's outward profession be what it will, the plague of apostasy is begun. Wherefore, although we ought greatly to prize and to endeavour after the true order of the church of Christ, the purity of worship, and regular administration of ordinances, yet let us take heed that we prize not ourselves too much on what we have attained; for if we do so, we shall be very apt to countenance ourselves in other neglects thereby, which will certainly bring us into a spiritual sickness and declension. And, one way or other, there is an undue confidence placed in these outward privileges, when either any or all of the things ensuing are found among us:—

(1.) *A neglect of private duties.* This ruinous event never falls out among professors, but it proceeds either from an over-fulness of the world and its occasions, or the prevalency of some predominant lust, or a sinful resting in or trusting unto the duties of public worship. When all these concur (unless God effectually awaken the soul), it is in a perishing condition. In particular, when men are satisfied, as unto religious worship, with that which is public or in communion with others, so as to countenance themselves in a neglect of the duties of their private retirements, they are in a high road unto apostasy.

(2.) *The indulgence of any private lust*, unto the satisfaction of the flesh. This great defect in the power of godliness is frequently countenanced by strictness in the form thereof. And a great effect it is of the deceitfulness of sin when it can delude the minds of men to justify themselves in any one sin, with the names, titles, reputation, and privileges of the church, or the ordinances whereof they are made partakers; and the secret efficacy of this deceit is not easy to be detected.

(3.) It is so, also, when *a loose and careless frame in our walking* is indulged unto on the same account. It is hard, indeed, to know directly whence this is come to pass, that so many professors of the gospel should give up themselves unto a negligent and careless walk, but that it is so come to pass is certain. There is no truth more

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acknowledged than that a strict and close walk with God, an attendance thereunto on all occasions with diligence and circumspection, with a continual conscientious fear of sin, is indispensably required unto acceptable, evangelical obedience or holiness; yet so it is, that many professors walk with that looseness and carelessness, that venturous boldness, with respect unto the occasions of sinning, that liberty or rather licentiousness of conversation, as are utterly inconsistent therewithal. As there are many causes hereof, so I fear this may be one among them, that they too much satisfy themselves with their interest in the church and its privileges, and with their observance of public worship and the ordinances thereof, according to their respective stations and capacities.

Wherefore, the sum of this direction is, that if we would be preserved from the prevalency of the present apostasy, we must have a strict regard unto our principles and practice with respect unto the privileges of the church and ordinances of gospel worship. If we neglect or despise them, we cast off the yoke of Christ, and have no ground to look for his acceptance of us or concernment in us. It is but folly for them to pretend a hope in his mercy who defy his authority. And if, on the other hand, we so rest in them as to countenance ourselves in any of the evils mentioned, we shall succeed into their room who, under the name and pretence of the church and its privileges, fell into an open apostasy from Christ and the gospel; for the same causes will produce the same effect in us as they did in them. There is a middle way between these extremes, which whoso are guided into will find rest and peace unto their souls; and this is no other but an humble, careful, conscientious improvement of them all unto their proper ends. And it may not be amiss to name some of those things whereby we may know whether our hearts are upright and rightly disposed in the use of gospel ordinances. And we may judge of ourselves herein:—

1. If *our hearts are bettered by them*, or *humbled for it if they are not*. Their end, with respect unto us, is to excite and put forth all grace into exercise. When, therefore, we find faith and love, delight in God, longing after an increase of grace and holiness, with a detestation of sin, fruitfulness in good works and all duties of obedience, joy in spiritual things, self-abasement, and admiration of grace, stirred up in us by them, our hearts need not condemn us as to want of sincerity in these duties, though we are sensible of many weaknesses and imperfections. And whereas, through the power of corruptions and temptations, through the weakness of the flesh and prevalency of unbelief, we come sometimes short of a sensible experience of this effect on our souls by and under them, there may yet remain a relieving evidence of some sincerity in what we do; and

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this is, if, rejecting all other pretences and prejudices, we charge ourselves alone with our unprofitableness, and be humbled in a sense thereof. Want hereof hath been the reason why some have rejected the ordinances of the gospel as dead and useless, and others have grown formal, careless, and barren, under the enjoyment of them. When all veils and coverings shall be taken away and destroyed, these things will appear to be the fruits of pride and of the deceitfulness of sin.

2. It is so when, in the dispensation of the ordinances, *spiritual things are realized and made nigh unto us.* When in the preaching of the word we find Jesus Christ "evidently set forth, crucified before our eyes," Gal. iii. 1; when the form of the things delivered is brought upon our minds, Rom. vi. 17; when we do, as it were, feel and handle the word of life, and the things hoped for have some kind of subsistence given them in our souls, as Heb. xi. 1,—then are we exercised in a due manner in this part of our obedience. To this purpose our apostle discourseth, Rom. x. 6–9. The word as preached and other ordinances do not direct us unto things afar off, but bring the Lord Christ with all the benefits of his mediation into our hearts. But if we content ourselves with empty light, with unaffecting notions of spiritual things, if we rest satisfied with the outward performance of our own duty and that of other men, we have just cause to fear that our hearts are not right in the sight of God in this matter.

3. When we find that a conscientious *attendance on all the ordinances of instituted worship doth quicken our diligence and watchfulness unto all other duties of obedience* that are required of us, we are conversant in them in a due manner. When under a pretence of them, and a mistaken satisfaction in them, men countenance themselves in the neglect of other duties, how way is made for farther apostasy from holiness hath been declared. Wherefore there can be no greater evidence of our due attendance unto them than when we are excited, quickened, enlarged, and confirmed by them unto and in all the ways of universal obedience. Those, therefore, who most conscientiously make use of church privileges and gospel ordinances are they whose hearts are most engaged unto all other duties by them.

Lastly, It is an evidence of the same importance when we have that experience of Christ and his grace in the administration of gospel ordinances according unto his will, as that *we are strengthened thereby to suffer for him and them* when we are called thereunto. The time will come when neither mere light and conviction of truth nor the gifts of the ministry will secure men unto their profession. But he who hath tasted how gracious Christ is in the ways of his appoint-

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ment will not easily be removed from his resolution of following him whithersoever he goeth.

Fourthly, *Take heed of the infection of national vices.* What I intend hereby hath been before declared. And this caution is most necessary when they are most prevalent among any people; for commonness will take off a sense of their guilt, and countenance will insensibly take away shame. Besides, when some go out unto an open excess, others are apt to justify themselves in vain practices and sinful miscarriages, because they rise not up unto the same height of provocation with them. This makes lesser vanities, in habits, attires, pleasures, misspense of time in talking-houses,[1] excess in eating and drinking, corrupt communication, and careless boldness in common converses, whereby persons tread in the steps, and sometimes on the very heels, of the predominant sins of the place and age, so to abound among us. Some openly show what they have a mind to be at, if they durst, and that it is more reputation and the power of convictions than the love of gospel holiness that restrain them from running forth into the same excess of riot with others. Israel of old "dwelt alone, and was not reckoned among the nations," Num. xxiii. 9; and "the remnant of Jacob is to be so in the midst," in the bowels "of many people," as to be a blessing unto them, Micah v. 7, not to be corrupted by them. If professors will so immerse themselves into the body of the people as insensibly to learn their manners, they will be carried down the stream with them into perdition; and the danger hereof is beyond what most men conceive. Grace was but sparingly administered unto the community of the people under the old testament, and therefore, after the giving of the law, God would not trust them to live among other people, nor other people to live among them, as knowing how unable they were to withstand the temptations of conformity unto them. Hereon he appointed that all the nations should be utterly extirpated where they were to inhabit, that they should not learn their customs, Lev. xviii. 30. The neglect of this wisdom of God, the transgression of his will herein, by mixing themselves with other nations and learning their manners, was that which proved their ruin. Under the gospel there is a more plentiful

[1] The author seems to allude to the coffee-houses, which, established in the time of the commonwealth, soon became a distinctive feature of London life. When no public meetings were allowed, and no public journals existed, the only method by which the news of the day could be learned was by a visit to a coffee-house; in which, besides the information reciprocated in private talk, there were leading orators who harangued the crowd on the current topics of public interest. So powerful was the expression of public opinion through the imperfect channel of these coffee-houses, that the government at one time attempted to suppress them; but the system had become so popular and so interwoven with the habits of the Londoners, that no enactment against it could be enforced. Much time, doubtless, would be wasted in these "talking-houses," and it is against this sin that the remarks of Owen are directed.—Ed.

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effusion of the Spirit. God now intrusts all that are called unto the obedience of it to live in the midst of all nations under heaven; yet he so doth it as to warn them of their danger thereby, and to require them to stand upon their guard herein continually. This is that part of true religion which the apostle James calls the "keeping of ourselves unspotted from the world," chap. i. 27. Most men think it enough that no more can be required of them nor expected from them than that they wallow not in the mire and pollutions of it. If their practice be free from actual open sins, they care not what spots of a worldly conversation are upon them; but they know not what will be the end thereof.

It may be it will be said, that unless we do conform ourselves in some things unto the customs that are prevalent among us, as in habit, and fashion, and way of converse, we shall be despised in the world, and neither we nor ours be of any regard.

I answer,—1. That I am not contending about small things, nor prescribing modes of attire or manner of deportment unto any. There is none who doth more despise the placing of religion in clothes, in gestures, in the refusal of civil and just respects, than I do; nor have I any severity in my thoughts against a distinction in these things among persons, according to their degrees and conditions in the world, though apparently there be an excess in all sorts herein. But that which I intend is, a compliance with the world in those things which border on and make some kind of representation of the predominant vices of the place and age wherein we live; and if you think you shall be despised if you come behind the rest of your rank and quality in the world in these things, still you will be so unless you come up unto them in all abominations, 1 Pet. iv. 3, 4;—and whether it be fit to relinquish God, and Christ, and the gospel, all holiness and morality, to have the friendship of the world, judge ye. And,—2. Be sure to outgo them in fixed honesty, kindness, benignity, usefulness, meekness, moderation of spirit, charity, bowels of compassion, readiness to help and relieve all men according unto your power, and you will quickly find, even in this world, how little you are concerned in that contempt of the vilest part of mankind whereof you seem to be afraid.

Fifthly, Carefully *avoid all those miscarriages of professors which alienate the minds of men from the gospel*, and countenance them in the contempt of the profession of it. Some of them we have mentioned before, and many of the like nature might be added unto them. As the scandalous, profligate lives of those in general who are called Christians give that offence unto Jews, Mohammedans, and Gentiles, all the world over, that hardens them unto a contempt and detestation of Christianity, and hath brought the whole matter

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of religion in the world unto force and the sword, so the miscarriages of the strictest sort of professors do greatly countenance others in their dislike of and enmity against the power of godliness which they profess; and so far as we continue in them, we have a share in the guilt of the present defection. Not to insist on particulars, the things of this nature that are charged on them may be reduced unto three heads:—1. Want of *love and unity* among themselves; 2. Want of *usefulness and kindness* towards all; 3. *Spiritual pride and censoriousness*, or rash judging of other men.

These are the things which are commonly charged on some professors; and although, it may be, they are but few who are guilty of all or any of these things, at least not as they are charged and reproached by others, yet they may all learn what in an especial manner to avoid, that they give no advantage unto those who seek for it and would be glad of it. It is our duty, by a watchful, holy conversation in all things, to "put to silence the ignorance of foolish men," and so universally to approve our sincerity unto God and men, that whereas we are, or may be at any time, "evil spoken of, as evil-doers, they may be ashamed, beholding our good conversation in Christ, and glorify God in the day of visitation." This is the law that we have brought ourselves under, not to fret and fume, and in our minds seek for revenge, when we are traduced and evil spoken of, but by a "patient continuance in well-doing," to overcome all the evil that the malice of hell or the world can cast upon us; and if we like not this law and rule, we had best relinquish our profession, for it is indispensably required of all the disciples of Jesus Christ. And he whose heart is confirmed by grace to do well whilst he is evil spoken of will find such present satisfaction, in a sense of his acceptation with Christ, as to make him say, "This yoke is easy, and this burden is light." Especially ought we carefully to avoid the things mentioned and appearances of them, whereby public offence is taken, and advantage made by evil men to countenance themselves in their sins. You are but few unto whom these things are communicated, and so may judge that all your care in and about them will be of little significancy to put any stop unto the general declension from gospel holiness; but it is hoped that all others are warned in the same manner, yea, and more effectually than you are. However, every vessel must stand on its own bottom; "the just shall live by his" own "faith;" "every one of us shall give account of himself to God;" and no more is required of you but your own personal duty.

It is true, you cannot put an end unto those differences and divisions, that want of love and agreement, that is among professors; but you may take care that the guilt of none of these things may

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be justly charged on you. Love unto the saints without dissimulation; readiness to bear in meekness with different apprehensions and palpable misapprehensions, not intrenching on the foundation; freedom from imposing your sentiments on those who cannot receive them, and from judging rashly on supposed failures; readiness for universal communion in all religious duties with all that "love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity,"—as they are our duties, as they are some of the principal ways whereby we may truly represent the Lord Christ and the doctrine of the gospel unto others, so they will disarm Satan and the world of a great engine whereby they work no small mischief unto the whole interest of religion.

Again: were all professors meek, quiet, peaceable, in their societies and among their neighbours; sober, temperate, humble in their personal conversation in the world; useful, kind, benign, condescending towards all; cheerful in trials and afflictions, always "rejoicing in the Lord,"—men not given up to a reprobate sense ([men] who are [so, are] not to be regarded) would at length be so far from taking offence at them as to judge that they should not know what to do without them, and be won to endeavour a conformity unto them. In like manner, were those rules more diligently attended unto which are prescribed unto all believers as unto their conversation in this world, it would be of no small advantage unto religion. See Phil. iv. 8; 1 Pet. ii. 12; 2 Cor. xiii. 7; Rom. xiii. 12, 13; 1 Thess. iv. 11, 12; Heb. xiii. 18. Did honesty, sincerity, uprightness in all the occasions of life, in the whole converse of professors in the world, shine more brightly and give more evidences of themselves than at present among many they seem to do, it would undoubtedly turn unto the unspeakable advantage of religion.

And, lastly, for that judging or condemning of others wherewith they are so provoked, there is but one way whereby it may be done so as to give no just offence, and this is in our lives. The practice of holiness judgeth all unholy persons in their own breasts; and if they are provoked thereby, there is nothing in it but a new aggravation of their own sin and impiety.

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ΦΡΟΝΗΜΑ ΤΟΥ ΠΝΕΥΜΑΤΟΣ·

OR, THE

GRACE AND DUTY OF BEING SPIRITUALLY MINDED

DECLARED AND PRACTICALLY IMPROVED.

To be spiritually minded is life and peace.—Rom. viii. 6.
Set your affection on things above.—Col. iii. 2.

LONDON: 1681.

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PREFATORY NOTE.

OWEN is an instance that attention to the outward order of the sanctuary, and zeal for the general rights of those who worship in it, are not incompatible with the cultivation of personal holiness and spirituality. In the year 1681, when he had published a tract in defence of the Nonconformists, and his laborious "Inquiry into Evangelical Churches," the following treatise, so rich in the spiritual experience of a renewed heart, was given to the world. During a season of indisposition so great that he had been led to anticipate the close of his earthly labours, he had composed some meditations for his own use; on his recovery he preached the substance of them to his congregation; and they were afterwards published in the shape of this treatise. There is scarcely one of the more important works of Owen, but some authority might be quoted as signifying a preference for it as the best of his productions; this treatise, however, would perhaps command the greatest number of suffrages in its favour. It evinces the same sharp discrimination of human motives and character, but to elevate believers above earthly objects and console them amid present trials seem to be its prevailing design; and it contains some passages which, in solemn tenderness and beauty, are not surpassed in all the writings of our author, who is here not so much a Boanerges set for the defence of the gospel, as a Barnabas intent on the consolation of the saints.

"The following treatise of Dr Owen," says Dr Chalmers, "holds a distinguished rank among the voluminous writings of this celebrated author; and it is characterized by a forcible application of truth to the conscience, by a depth of experimental feeling, an accuracy of spiritual discernment into the intricacies and operations of the human mind, and a skill in exploring the secrecies of the heart, and the varieties of affection, and the ever-shifting phases of character, which render this admirable treatise not less a test than a valuable guide to the honest inquirer, in his scrutiny into the real state of his heart and affections."

ANALYSIS.

After an explanation of Rom. viii. 6, the duty of being spiritually minded is described as including,—1. The exercise of the mind in its thoughts concerning spiritual things; 2. The inclination of the mind in its affections towards them; and, 3. The complacency of the mind in them, chap. I. The treatise is divided into two parts:—I. The former relating to the first of these heads,—the nature of *spiritual thoughts;* II. The latter to the two other heads,—the exercise of *spiritual affections.*

PART I. As to the character of those thoughts which are the evidence of spiritual mindedness,—1. They are *natural,* in the sense of arising from ourselves, and as distinguished from thoughts suggested to the mind by (1.) impressions constraining it to acts opposed to its habitual procedure, and (2.) outward occasions; such as [1.] the preaching of the Word, [2.] prayer, and [3.] the discourses and remarks of other men. 2. They *abound in us, filling and engrossing our minds,* II.–IV.

An inquiry follows into the *objects* of spiritual thoughts; which are,—1. The dispensations of Providence; 2. Special trials and temptations; and 3. Heavenly and eternal realities. In regard to the latter,—(1.) The motives inducing us to fix our thoughts on them are mentioned; faith is thereby increased, hope is exercised, preparation is made for the cross, and the mind weaned from the world. And (2.) Directions for this spiritual exercise are supplied;—the mind must be occupied with right notions of these objects, directed to them with intensity, and led to compare the blessedness of an interest in them with the opposite state of eternal death and misery, V. VI. The *especial objects* of spiritual contemplation are,—1. The person of Christ; and, 2. God himself, who must be in our thoughts, in opposition to atheism, practical infidelity, various inferior degrees and ways of forgetting God, and the indulgence of secret lusts. The thoughts which are characteristic of spiritual affections are delineated, VII., VIII. In our consideration of God, we must think of,—(1.) His being; (2.) His omnipresence and omniscience; and, (3.) His omnipotence, IX. Various counsels are tendered to such as cannot fix their thoughts with steadiness on spiritual and heavenly objects, X.

PART II. The two divisions of the proposed method respecting the inclination of the mind to spiritual thoughts and complacency in them are considered together; a preliminary account is given of the various ways by which God weans our affections from the world, XI. In order that our affections may be spiritual, it is shown,—I. that in *principle* they must be renewed by grace: which renovation is proved,—1. By the universality of the gracious change produced; 2. The delight experienced in sacred duties; 3. The assimilating influence exerted on the mind by spiritual objects; and, 4. By the circumstance that, if our affections are renewed, the person of Christ is the centre of them, XII.–XVIII. II. Spiritual mindedness in our affections is farther seen in the *object* about which they are conversant,—God in Christ. The considerations endearing the object to us are,—1. its infinite beauty; 2. the fulness of wisdom in spiritual things; 3. their value as perfective of our present condition; and, 4. as constituting in the future enjoyment of them our eternal blessedness, XIX. III. The soul's *application* to such objects must be firm, accompanied with a spiritual relish for them, must afford a continual spring of spiritual affections, must be prevailing and victorious, and afford help in subduing the remaining vanity to which the heart may be addicted, XX. After this copious exposition of the nature of spiritual mindedness, the blessings accruing from it are briefly unfolded,—"life and peace," XXI.—ED.

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PREFACE.

I THINK it necessary to give the reader a brief account of the nature and design of the ensuing plain discourse, which may both direct him in the reading and be some kind of apology for myself in the publishing of it. He may know, therefore, that the thoughts here communicated were originally private meditations for my own use, in a season wherein I was every way unable to do any thing for the edification of others, and far from expectation that ever I should be so able any more in this world. Receiving, as I thought, some benefit and satisfaction in the exercise of my own meditations therein, when God was graciously pleased to restore a little strength unto me, I insisted on the same subject in the instruction of a private congregation. And this I did, partly out of a sense of the advantage I had received myself by being conversant in them, and partly from an apprehension that the duties directed and pressed unto in the whole discourse were seasonable, from all sorts of present circumstances, to be declared and urged on the minds and consciences of professors: for, leaving others unto the choice of their own methods and designs, I acknowledge that these are the two things whereby I regulate my work in the whole course of my ministry. To impart those truths of whose power I hope I *have had* in some measure *a real experience*, and to press those duties which *present occasions, temptations, and other circumstances, do render necessary* to be attended unto in a peculiar manner, are the things which I would principally apply myself unto in the work of teaching others; for as in the work of the ministry in general, the whole counsel of God concerning the salvation of the church by Jesus Christ is to be declared, so in particular we are not to fight uncertainly, as men beating the air, nor shoot our arrows at random, without a certain scope and design. Knowledge of the flock whereof we are overseers, with a due consideration of their wants, their graces, their temptations, their light, their strength and weakness, are required herein. And when, in pursuance of that design, the preparation of the word to be dispensed proceeds from zeal for the glory of God and compassion unto the souls of men, when it is delivered with the demonstration of a due reverence unto God whose word it is, and of authority towards them unto whom it is dispensed, with a deep sense of that great account which both they that preach and they that hear the word preached must shortly give before the judgment-seat of Christ, there may be a comfortable expectation of a blessed issue of the whole work. But my present design is only to declare in particular the reasons why I judged the preaching and publishing of this small and plain discourse, concerning "the Grace and Duty of being Spiritually Minded," not to be altogether unseasonable at this time in the present circumstances of most Christians. And the first thing which I would observe unto this end is, the present importunity of the world to impose itself on the minds of men, and the various ways of insinuation whereby it possesseth and

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filleth them. If it attain hereunto,—if it can fill the minds, the thoughts, and affections of men, with itself,—it will in some fortify the soul against faith and obedience, and in others weaken all grace, and endanger eternal ruin. For "if we love the world, the love of the Father is not in us;" and when the world fills our thoughts, it will entangle our affections. And, first, the present state of all public affairs in it, with an apprehended concernment of private persons therein, continually exerciseth the thoughts of many, and is almost the only subject of their mutual converse; for the world is at present in a mighty hurry, and being in many places cast off from all foundations of steadfastness, it makes the minds of men giddy with its revolutions, or disorderly in the expectations of them.

Thoughts about these things are both allowable and unavoidable, if they take not the mind out of its own power by their multiplicity, vehemency, and urgency, until it be unframed as unto spiritual things, retaining neither room nor time for their entertainment.

Hence men walk and talk as if the world were all, when comparatively it is nothing.

And when men come with their warmed affections, reeking with thoughts of these things, unto the performance of or attendance unto any spiritual duty, it is very difficult for them, if not impossible, to stir up any grace unto a due and vigorous exercise. Unless this plausible advantage which the world hath obtained of insinuating itself and its occasions into the minds of men, so as to fill them and possess them, be watched against and obviated, so far, at least, as that it may not transform the mind into its own image and likeness, this grace of being spiritually minded, which is life and peace, cannot be attained nor kept unto its due exercise.

Nor can we be any of us delivered from this snare, at this season, without a watchful endeavour to keep and preserve our minds in the constant contemplation of things spiritual and heavenly, proceeding from the prevalent adherence of our affections unto them, as will appear in the ensuing discourse.

Again; there are so great and pregnant evidences of the prevalency of an earthly, worldly frame of spirit in many who make profession of religion, that it is high time they were called unto a due consideration how unanswerable they are therein unto the power and spirituality of that religion which they do profess. There is no way whereby such a frame may be evinced to prevail in many, yea, in the generality of such professors, that is not manifest unto all. In their habits, attires, and vestments, in their usual converse and misspense of time, in their over-liberal entertainment of themselves and others, unto the borders of excess, and sundry other things of a like nature, there is in many such a conformity unto the world (a thing severely forbidden) that it is hard to make a distinction between them. And these things do manifest such a predominancy of carnal affections in the minds of men as, whatever may be pretended unto the contrary, is inconsistent with spiritual peace. To call men off from this evil frame of heart and mind, to discover the sin and danger of it, to direct them unto the ways and means whereby it may be effected, to supply their thoughts and affections with better objects, to discover and press that exercise of them which is indispensably required of all believers if they design life and peace, is some part of the work of the ensuing discourse. It may be it will be judged but a weak attempt as unto the attaining of that end; but it cannot be denied to have these two advantages,—first, that it is seasonable, and, secondly, that it is sincerely intended. And if it have this only success, that it may occasion others who have more ability and opportunity than I have to bring in their assistance for an opposition unto the vehement and importunate insinuations of the world in these things to have an entertainment in

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the minds of professors, this labour will not be lost. But things are come to that pass amongst us that unless a more than ordinary vigorous exercise of the ministry of the word, with other means appointed unto the same end, be engaged in to recall professors unto that strict mortification, that sincerity of conversation, that separation from the ways of the world, that heavenly mindedness, that delight in the contemplation of spiritual things, which the gospel and the whole nature of Christian religion do require, we shall lose the glory of our profession, and leave it very uncertain what will be our eternal condition. The same may be spoken concerning love of the world, as unto the advantages and emoluments which men trust to attain unto themselves thereby. This is that which renders men earthly minded, and most remote from having their conversation above. In the pursuit of this corrupt affection do many professors of religion grow withering, useless, sapless, giving no evidence that the love of God abideth in them. On these and many other accounts do many Christians evidence themselves to be strangers from spiritual mindedness, from a life of meditation and holy contemplation on things above; yet unless we are found in these things in some good measure, no grace will thrive or flourish in us, no duty will be rightly performed by us, no condition sanctified or improved, nor are we prepared in a due manner, or "made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light." Wherefore, as was said, to direct and provoke men unto that which is the only remedy of all these evils, which alone is the means of giving them a view into and a foretaste of eternal glory, especially unto such who are in my own condition,—namely, in a very near approach unto a departure out of this world,—is the design and scope of the ensuing discourse, which is recommended unto the grace of God for the benefit of the reader.

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THE

GRACE AND DUTY OF BEING SPIRITUALLY MINDED.

PART I.

CHAPTER I.

The words of the text explained: "To be spiritually minded is life and peace." Rom. viii. 6.

THE expression in our translation sounds differently from that in the original. "To be spiritually minded," say we. In the original it is φρόνημα τοῦ πνεύματος, as that in the former part of the verse is φρόνημα τῆς σαρκός, which we render "to be carnally minded." In the margin we read, "the minding of the flesh" and "the minding of the Spirit;" and there is great variety in the rendering of the words in all translations, both ancient and modern. "Prudentia, sapientia, intelligentia, mens, cogitatio, discretio, id quod Spiritus sapit,"—"The wisdom, the understanding, the mind, the thought or contrivance, the discretion of the Spirit, that which the Spirit savoureth," are used to express it. All our English translations, from Tindal's, the first of them, have constantly used, "To be spiritually minded;" neither do I know any words whereby the emphasis of the original, considering the design of the apostle in the place, can be better expressed. But the meaning of the Holy Ghost in them must be farther inquired into.

In the whole verse there are two entire propositions, containing a double antithesis, the one in their subjects, the other in their predicates; and this opposition is the highest and greatest that is beneath eternal blessedness and eternal ruin.

The opposite *subjects* are, the "minding of the flesh" and the "minding of the Spirit," or the being "carnally minded" and "spiritually minded." And these two do constitute two states of mankind, unto the one of which every individual person in the world doth belong; and it is of the highest concernment unto the souls of men to know whether of them they appertain unto. As unto the qualities expressed by "the flesh" and "the Spirit," there may be a

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mixture of them in the same persons at the same time,—there is so in all that are regenerate; for in them "the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh, and these are contrary," Gal. v. 17. Thus different, contrary actings in the same subject constitute not distinct states; but where either of them is predominant or hath a prevalent rule in the soul, there it makes a different state. This distinction of states the apostle expresseth, Rom. viii. 9, "But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit." Some are "in the flesh, and cannot please God," verse 8; they are "after the flesh," verse 5; they "walk after the flesh," verse 1; they "live after the flesh," verse 13. This is one state. Others are "in the Spirit," verse 9; "after the Spirit," verse 5; "walk after the Spirit," verse 1. This is the other state. The first sort are "carnally minded," the other are "spiritually minded." Unto one of these doth every living man belong; he is under the ruling conduct of the flesh or of the Spirit; there is no middle state, though there are different degrees in each of these as to good and evil.

The difference between these two states is great, and the distance in a manner infinite, because an eternity in blessedness or misery doth depend upon it; and this at present is evidenced by the different fruits and effects of the principles and their operations which constitute these different states, which is expressed in the opposition that is between the predicates of the propositions: for the minding of the flesh is "death," but the minding of the Spirit is "life and peace."

"To be carnally minded is death." Death, as it is absolutely penal, is either spiritual or eternal. The first of these it is formally, the other meritoriously. It is formally death spiritual: for they that are carnally minded are "dead in trespasses and sins," Eph. ii. 1; for those who "fulfil the desires of the flesh and of the mind are by nature children of wrath," verse 3,—are penally under the power of spiritual death. They are "dead in sins and the uncircumcision of the flesh," Col. ii. 13. And it is death eternal meritoriously: "For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die," Rom. viii. 13; as "the wages of sin is death," chap. vi. 23.

The reason why the apostle denounces so woful a doom, so dreadful a sentence, on the carnal mind, he declares in the two next verses: "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God." If it be thus with the carnal mind, it is no wonder that "to be carnally minded is death;" it is not meet it should be any thing else. That which is enmity against God is under the curse of God.

In opposition hereunto it is affirmed that "to be spiritually minded," or the minding of the Spirit, "is life and peace." And

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these are the things which we are particularly to inquire into,—namely, What is this "minding of the Spirit;" and then, How it is "life and peace."

1. The "Spirit" in this context is evidently used in a double sense, as is usual where both the Holy Spirit himself and his work on the souls of men are related unto. (1.) The *person of the Spirit of God himself*, or the Holy Ghost, is intended by it: Rom. viii. 9, "If so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you." And so also verse 11, "The Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead." He is spoken of as the principal efficient cause of all the spiritual mercies and benefits here and afterward insisted on. (2.) It is used for *the principle of spiritual life* wrought in all that are regenerate by the Holy Ghost; for "that which is born of the Spirit is spirit," John iii. 6.

It is most probable that the name "Spirit" is here used in the latter sense,—not for the Spirit himself, but for "that which is born of the Spirit," the principle of spiritual life in them that are born of God; for it is, in its nature, actings, inclinations, and operations, opposed unto "the flesh," Rom. viii. 1, 4, 5. But "the flesh" here intended is that inherent corrupt principle of depraved nature whence all evil actions do proceed, and wherewith the actions of all evil men are vitiated. The opposition between them is the same with that mentioned and declared by the apostle, Gal. v. 17, etc. Wherefore "the Spirit" in this place is the holy, vital principle of new obedience, wrought in the souls of believers by the Holy Ghost, enabling them to live unto God.

2. Unto this Spirit there is φρόνημα ascribed, which, as we have intimated, is translated with great variety. Φρόνησις is the principal power and act of the mind. It is its light, wisdom, prudence, knowledge, understanding, and discretion. It is not so with respect unto speculation or ratiocination merely, which is διάνοια or σύνεσις: but this φρόνησις is its power as it is practical, including the habitual frame and inclination of the affections also. It is its faculty to conceive of things with a delight in them and adherence unto them, from that suitableness which it finds in them unto all its affections. Hence we translate φρονεῖν sometimes to "think,"—that is, to conceive and judge, Rom. xii. 3; sometimes to "set the affection," Col. iii. 2, —to have such an apprehension of things as to cleave unto them with our affections; sometimes to "mind," to "mind earthly things," Phil. iii. 19, which includeth that relish and savour which the mind finds in the things it is fixed on. Nowhere doth it design a notional conception of things only, but principally the engagement of the affections unto the things which the mind apprehends.

Φρόνημα, the word here used, expresseth the actual exercise, τῆς φρο-

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νήσεως, of the power of the mind before described. Wherefore, the "minding of the Spirit" is the actual exercise of the mind as renewed by the Holy Ghost, as furnished with a principle of spiritual life and light, in its conception of spiritual things and the setting of its affections on them, as finding that relish and savour in them wherewith it is pleased and satisfied.

And something we must yet farther observe, to give light unto this description of the "minding of the Spirit," as it is here spoken of:—

1. It is not spoken of absolutely as unto what it is in itself, but with respect unto its power and prevalency in us, significantly rendered, "To be spiritually minded;" that is, to have the mind changed and renewed by a principle of spiritual life and light, so as to be continually acted and influenced thereby unto thoughts and meditations of spiritual things, from the affections cleaving unto them with delight and satisfaction. So, on the contrary, it is when men "mind earthly things." From a principle of love unto them, arising from their suitableness unto their corrupt affections, their thoughts, meditations, and desires are continually engaged about them. Wherefore,—

2. Three things may be distinguished in the great duty of being spiritually minded, under which notion it is here recommended unto us:—

(1.) The *actual exercise of the mind*, in its thoughts, meditations, and desires, about things spiritual and heavenly. So is it expressed in the verse foregoing: "They that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh,"—they think on them, their contrivances are about them, and their desires after them; "but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit." They mind them by fixing their thoughts and meditations upon them.

(2.) The *inclination, disposition, and frame of the mind*, in all its affections, whereby it adheres and cleaves unto spiritual things. This "minding of the Spirit" resides habitually in the affections. Wherefore, the φρόνημα of the Spirit, or the mind as renewed and acted by a spiritual principle of light and life, is the exercise of its thoughts, meditations, and desires, on spiritual things, proceeding from the love and delight of its affections in them and engagement unto them.

(3.) A *complacency of mind*, from that gust, relish, and savour, which it finds in spiritual things, from their suitableness unto its constitution, inclinations, and desires. There is a salt in spiritual things, whereby they are condited and made savoury unto a renewed mind; though to others they are as the white of an egg, that hath no taste or savour in it. In this gust and relish lies the sweetness and satisfaction of spiritual life. Speculative notions about spiritual things, when they are alone, are dry, sapless, and barren. In this gust we

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taste by experience that God is gracious, and that the love of Christ is better than wine, or whatever else hath the most grateful relish unto a sensual appetite. This is the proper foundation of that "joy which is unspeakable and full of glory."

All these things do concur in the minding of the Spirit, or to constitute any person spiritually minded. And although the foundation of the whole duty included in it lies in the affections, and their immediate adherence unto spiritual things, whence the thoughts and meditations of the mind about them do proceed, yet I shall treat of the distinct parts of this duty in the order laid down, beginning with the exercise of our thoughts and meditations about them; for they being the first genuine actings of the mind, according unto the prevalency of affections in it, they will make the best and most evident discovery of what nature the spring is from whence they do arise. And I shall not need to speak distinctly unto what is mentioned in the third place, concerning the complacency of the mind in what its affections are fixed on, for it will fall in with sundry other things that are to be spoken unto.

But before we do proceed, it is not amiss, as I suppose, to put a remark upon those important truths which are directly contained in the words proposed as the foundation of the present discourse; as,—

1. *To be spiritually minded is the great distinguishing character of true believers from all unregenerate persons.* As such is it here asserted by the apostle. All those who are "carnally minded," who are "in the flesh," they are unregenerate, they are not born of God, they please him not, nor can do so, but must perish for ever. But those who are "spiritually minded" are born of God, do live unto him, and shall come to the enjoyment of him. Hereon depend the trial and determination of what state we do belong unto.

2. *Where any are spiritually minded, there, and there alone, is life and peace.* What these are, wherein they do consist, what is their excellency and pre-eminence above all things in this world, how they are the effects and consequents of our being spiritually minded, shall be afterwards declared.

There is neither of these considerations but is sufficient to demonstrate of how great concernment unto us it is to be spiritually minded, and diligently to inquire whether we are so or no.

It will therefore be no small advantage unto us to have our souls and consciences always affected with and in due subjection unto the power of this truth,—namely, that "to be spiritually minded is life and peace;" whence it will follow, that whatever we may think otherwise, if we are not so, we have neither of them, neither life nor peace. It will, I say, be of use unto us if we are affected with the power of it; for many greatly deceive themselves in hearing the word. They

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admit of sacred truths in their understanding, and assent unto them, but take not in the power of them on their consciences, nor strictly judge of their state and condition by them, which proves their ruin; for hereby they seem to themselves to believe that whereof in truth they believe not one syllable as they ought. They hear it, they understand it in the notion of it, they assent unto it, at least they do not contradict it, yea, they commend it oftentimes and approve of it, but yet they believe it not; for if they did, they would judge themselves by it, and reckon on it that it will be with them at the last day according as things are determined therein.

Or such persons are, as the apostle James declares, "like a man beholding his natural face in a glass; for he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was," chap. i. 23, 24. There is a representation made of them, their state and condition, unto them in the word; they behold it, and conclude that it is even so with them as the word doth declare; but immediately their minds are filled with other thoughts, acted by other affections, taken up with other occasions, and they forget in a moment the representation made of themselves and their condition. Wherefore all that I have to offer on this subject will be utterly lost, unless a firm persuasion hereof be fixed on our minds, unless we are under the power of it, that "to be spiritually minded is life and peace;" so that whatever our light and profession be, our knowledge or our duty, without this we have indeed no real interest in life and peace.

These things being premised, I shall more practically open the nature of this duty, and what is required unto this frame of spirit. To be "spiritually minded" may be considered either as unto the nature and essence of it, or as unto its degrees; for one may be so more than another, or the same person may be more so at one time than another. In the first way it is opposed unto being "carnally minded;" in the other unto being "earthly minded."

"To be carnally minded is," as the apostle speaks, "death;" it is so every way; and they who are so are dead in trespasses and sins. This is opposed unto being "spiritually minded," as unto its nature or essence. When a man, as unto the substance and being of the grace and duty intended, is not spiritually minded, he is carnally minded, —that is, under the power of death spiritual, and obnoxious unto death eternal. This is the principal foundation we proceed upon, whence we demonstrate the indispensable necessity of the frame of mind inquired after.

There are two ways wherein men are earthly minded. The one is absolute, when the love of earthly things is *wholly predominant* in the mind. This is not formally and properly to be carnally minded, which is of a larger extent. The one denomination is from

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the *root* and *principle*, namely, the flesh; the other from the *object*, or the things of the earth. The latter is a branch from the former, as its root. To be earthly minded is an operation and effect of the carnal mind in one especial way and instance; and it is as exclusive of life and salvation as the carnal mind itself, Phil. iii. 19; 1 John ii. 15, 16. This, therefore, is opposed unto the being of spiritual mindedness no less than to be carnally minded is. When there is in any a love of earthly things that is predominant, whence a person may be rightly denominated to be earthly minded, he is not, nor can be, spiritually minded at all; he hath no interest in the frame of heart and spirit intended thereby. And thus it is evidently with the greatest part of them who are called Christians in the world, let them pretend what they will to the contrary.

Again; there is a being earthly minded which consists in an *inordinate* affection unto the things of this world. It is that which is sinful, which ought to be mortified; yet it is not absolutely inconsistent with the substance and being of the grace inquired after. Some who are really and truly spiritually minded, yet may, for a time at least, be under such an inordinate affection unto and care about earthly things, that if not absolutely, yet comparatively, as unto what they ought to be and might be, they may be justly said to be earthly minded. They are so in respect of those degrees in being spiritually minded which they ought to aim at and may attain unto. And where it is thus, this grace can never thrive or flourish, it can never advance unto any eminent degree.

This is the Zoar of many professors,—that "little one" wherein they would be spared. Such an earthly mindedness as is wholly inconsistent with being spiritually minded, as unto the state and condition which depends thereon, they would avoid; for this they know would be absolutely exclusive of life and peace. They cannot but know that such a frame is as inconsistent with salvation as living in the vilest sin that any man can contract the guilt of. There are more ways of spiritual and eternal death than one, as well as of natural. All that die have not the plague, and all that perish eternally are not guilty of the same profligate sins. The covetous are excluded from the kingdom of God no less severely than fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, and thieves, 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10. But there is a degree in being earthly minded which they suppose their interest, advantages, relations, and occasions of life do call for, which they would be a little indulged in; they may abide in such a frame without a disparagement of their profession. And the truth is, they have too many companions to fear an especial reflection on themselves. The multitude of the guilty take away the sense and shame of the guilt. But, besides, they hope well that it is not inconsistent abso-

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lutely with being spiritually minded; only they cannot well deny but that it is contrary unto such degrees in that grace, such thriving in that duty, as is recommended unto them. They think well of others who are spiritually minded in an eminent degree, at least they do so as unto the thing itself in general; for when they come unto particular instances of this or that man, for the most part they esteem what is beyond their own measure to be little better than pretence. But, in general, to be spiritually minded in an eminent degree, they cannot but esteem it a thing excellent and desirable;—but it is for them who are more at leisure than they are; their circumstances and occasions require them to satisfy themselves with an inferior measure.

To obviate such pretences, I shall insist on nothing, in the declaration of this duty and the necessity of it, but what is incumbent on all that believe, and without which they have no grounds to assure their conscience before God. And at present in general I shall say, *Whoever he be who doth not sincerely aim at the highest degree of being spiritually minded which the means he enjoyeth would lead him unto, and which the light he hath received doth call for,—whoever judgeth it necessary unto his present advantages, occasions, and circumstances, to rest in such measures or degrees of it as he cannot but know come short of what he ought to aim at, and so doth not endeavour after completeness in the will of God herein,—can have no satisfaction in his own mind, hath no unfailing grounds whereon to believe that he hath any thing at all of the reality of this grace in him.* Such a person possibly may have life, which accompanies the essence of this grace, but he cannot have peace, which follows on its degree in a due improvement. And it is to be feared that far the greatest number of them who satisfy themselves in this apprehension, willingly neglecting an endeavour after the farther degrees of this grace and growth in this duty, which their light or convictions, and the means they enjoy, do suggest unto them, are indeed carnally minded and every way obnoxious unto death.

CHAPTER II.

A particular account of the nature of this grace and duty of being spiritually minded—How it is stated in and evidenced by our thoughts.

HAVING stated *the general concernments* of that frame of mind which is here recommended unto us, we may proceed to inquire more particularly into the nature of it, according unto the description before given in distinct propositions. And we shall carry on

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both these intentions together,—first, to show *what it is*, and wherein it doth consist; and then, *how it doth evidence itself*, so as that we may frame a right judgment whether it be in us or no. And we shall have no regard unto them who either neglect or despise these things on any pretence whatever; for this is the word according unto which we shall all shortly be judged, "To be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace."

Thoughts and meditations as proceeding from spiritual affections are the first things wherein this spiritual mindedness doth consist, and whereby it doth evidence itself. Our thoughts are like the blossoms on a tree in the spring. You may see a tree in the spring all covered with blossoms, so that nothing else of it appears. Multitudes of them fall off and come to nothing. Ofttimes where there are most blossoms there is least fruit. But yet there is no fruit, be it of what sort it will, good or bad, but it comes in and from some of those blossoms. The mind of man is covered with thoughts, as a tree with blossoms. Most of them fall off, vanish, and come to nothing, end in vanity; and sometimes where the mind doth most abound with them there is the least fruit; the sap of the mind is wasted and consumed in them. Howbeit there is no fruit which actually we bring forth, be it good or bad, but it proceeds from some of these thoughts. Wherefore, ordinarily, these give the best and surest measure of the frame of men's minds. "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he," Prov. xxiii. 7. In case of strong and violent temptations, the real frame of a man's heart is not to be judged by the multiplicity of thoughts about any object, for whether they are from Satan's suggestions, or from inward darkness, trouble, and horror, they will impose such a continual sense of themselves on the mind as shall engage all its thoughts about them; as when a man is in a storm at sea, the current of his thoughts run quite another way than when he is in safety about his occasions. But ordinarily voluntary thoughts are the best measure and indication of the frame of our minds. As the nature of the soil is judged by the grass which it brings forth, so may the disposition of the heart by the predominancy of voluntary thoughts; they are the original actings of the soul, the way whereby the heart puts forth and empties the treasure that is in it, the waters that first rise and flow from that fountain. Every man's heart is his treasury, and the treasure that is in it is either good or evil, as our Saviour tells us. There is a good and bad treasure of the heart; but whatever a man hath, be it good or evil, there it is. This treasure is opening, emptying, and spending itself continually, though it can never be exhausted; for it hath a fountain, in nature or grace, which no expense can diminish, yea, it increaseth and getteth strength by it. The more you spend of the

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treasure of your heart in any kind, the more will you abound in treasure of the same kind. Whether it be good or evil, it grows by expense and exercise; and the principal way whereby it puts forth itself is by the thoughts of the mind. If the heart be evil, they are for the most part vain, filthy, corrupt, wicked, foolish; if it be under the power of a principle of grace, and so have a good treasure in it, it puts forth itself by thoughts suitable unto its nature and compliant with its inclinations.

Wherefore, these thoughts give the best measure of the frame of our minds and hearts, I mean such as are voluntary, such as the mind of its own accord is apt for, inclines and ordinarily betakes itself unto. Men may have a multitude of thoughts about the affairs of their callings and the occasions of life, which yet may give no due measure of the inward frame of their hearts. So men whose calling and work it is to study the Scripture, or the things revealed therein, and to preach them unto others, cannot but have many thoughts about spiritual things, and yet may be, and oftentimes are, most remote from being spiritually minded. They may be forced by their work and calling to think of them early and late, evening and morning, and yet their minds be no way rendered or proved spiritual thereby. It were well if all of us who are preachers would diligently examine ourselves herein. So is it with them who oblige themselves to read the Scriptures, it may be so many chapters every day. Notwithstanding the diligent performance of their task, they may be most remote from being spiritually minded. See Ezek. xxxiii. 31. But there is a certain track and course of thoughts that men ordinarily betake themselves unto when not affected with present occasions. If these be vain, foolish, proud, ambitious, sensual, or filthy, such is the mind and its frame; if they be holy, spiritual, and heavenly, such may the frame of the mind be judged to be. But these things must be more fully explained.

It is the great character and description of the frame of men's minds in an unregenerate condition, or before the renovation of their natures, that "every imagination of the thoughts of their hearts is only evil continually," Gen. vi. 5. They are continually coining figments and imaginations in their hearts, stamping them into thoughts that are vain, foolish, and wicked. All other thoughts in them are occasional; these are the natural, genuine product of their hearts. Hence the clearest, and sometimes first, discovery of the bottomless evil treasure of filth, folly, and wickedness, that is in the heart of man by nature, is from the innumerable multitude of evil imaginations which are there coined and thrust forth every day. So the wicked are said to be "like the troubled sea when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt," Isa. lvii. 20. There is a fulness

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of evil in their hearts, like that of water in the sea; this fulness is troubled or put into continual motion by their lusts and impetuous desires; hence the mire and dirt of evil thoughts are continually cast up in them.

It is therefore evident that the predominancy of voluntary thoughts is the best and most sure indication of the inward frame and state of the mind; for if it be so on the one side as unto the carnal mind, it is so on the other as unto the spiritual. Wherefore, to be spiritually minded, in the first place, is to have the course and stream of those thoughts which we ordinarily retreat unto, which we approve of as suited unto our affections, to be about spiritual things. Therein consists the minding of the Spirit.

But because all men, unless horribly profligate, have thoughts about spiritual things, yet we know that all men are not spiritually minded, we must consider what is required unto such thoughts to render them a certain indication of the state of our minds. And there are these three things required hereunto:—

FIRST, That they be *natural*, arising from ourselves, and not from outward occasions. The psalmist mentions the "inward thought" of men, Ps. xlix. 11, lxiv. 6; but whereas all thoughts are the inward acts of the mind, it should seem that this expression makes no distinction of the especial kind of thoughts intended from those of another sort. But the difference is not in the formal nature of them, but in the causes, springs, and occasions. Inward thoughts are such as arise merely and solely from men's inward principles, dispositions, and inclinations, that are not suggested or excited by any outward objects. Such in wicked men are those actings of their lusts whereby they entice and seduce themselves, James i. 14. Their lusts stir up thoughts leading and encouraging them to make provision for the flesh. These are their "inward thoughts." Of the same nature are those thoughts which are the "minding of the Spirit." They are the first natural egress and genuine acting of the habitual disposition of the mind and soul.

Thus in covetous men there are two sorts of thoughts whereby their covetousness acts itself:—First, such as are occasioned by outward objects and opportunities. So it was with Achan, Josh. vii. 21. "When," saith he, "I saw among the spoils a goodly Babylonish garment, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold, then I coveted them." His sight of them, with an opportunity of possessing himself of them, excited covetous thoughts and desires in him. So is it with others every day, whose occasions call them to converse with the objects of their lusts. And some by such objects may be surprised into thoughts that their minds are not habitually inclined unto; and therefore when they are known, it is our duty to

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avoid them. But the same sort of persons have thoughts of this nature arising from themselves only, their own dispositions and inclinations, without any outward provocations. "The vile person will speak villany, and his heart will work iniquity," Isa. xxxii. 6; and this he doth as the "liberal deviseth liberal things," verse 8. From his own disposition and inclination, he is contriving in his thoughts how to act according to them. So the unclean person hath two sorts of thoughts with respect unto the satisfaction of his lust:—First, such as are occasioned in his mind by the external objects of it. Hereunto stage plays, revellings, dancings, with the society of bold persons, persons of corrupt communication, do contribute their wicked service. For the avoidance of this snare, Job "made a covenant with his eyes," chap. xxxi. 1; and our Saviour gives that holy declaration of the evil of it, Matt. v. 28. But he hath an habitual spring of these thoughts in himself, constantly inclining and disposing him thereunto. Hence the apostle Peter tells us that such persons "have eyes full of an adulteress, that cannot cease from sin," 2 Epist. ii. 14. Their own affections make them restless in their thoughts and contrivances about sin. So is it with them who are given to excess in wine or strong drink. They have pleasing thoughts raised in them from the object of their lust represented unto them. Hence Solomon gives that advice against the occasion of them, Prov. xxiii. 31. But it is their own habitual disposition which carries them unto pleasing thoughts of the satisfaction of their lust; which he describes, verses 33–35. So is it in other cases. The thoughts of this latter sort are men's inward thoughts; and such must these be of spiritual things, whence we may be esteemed spiritually minded.

Ps. xlv. 1, saith the psalmist, "My heart is inditing a good matter: I speak of the things which I have made touching the King." He was meditating on spiritual things, on the things of the person and kingdom of Christ. Hence his heart "bubbled up" (as it is in the original) "a good matter." It is an allusion taken from a quick spring of living waters: from its own life and fulness it bubbles up the water that runs and flows from it. So is it with these thoughts in them that are spiritually minded. There is a living fulness of spiritual things in their minds and affections that springeth up into holy thoughts about them.

From hence doth our Saviour give us the great description of spiritual life. It is "a well of living water springing up into everlasting life," John iv. 10, 12. The Spirit, with his graces residing in the heart of a believer, is a well of living water. Nor is it such a well as, content with its own fulness, doth not of its own accord, without any instrument or pains in drawing, send out its refreshing waters,

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as it is with most wells, though of living water; for this is spoken by our Saviour in answer and opposition unto that objection of the woman, upon his mention of giving living water, verse 10: "Sir," saith she, "thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep: whence wilt thou have this water?" verse 11. "True," saith he, "such is the nature of this well and water, dead, earthly things,—they are of no use, unless we have instruments, lines and buckets, to draw withal. But the living water which I shall give is of another nature. It is not water to be kept in a pit or cistern without us, whence it must be drawn; but it is within us, and that not dead and useless, but continually springing up unto the use and refreshment of them that have it." For so is it with the principle of the new creature, of the new nature, the Spirit and his graces, in the hearts of them that do believe,—it doth of itself and from itself, without any external influence on it, incline and dispose the whole soul unto spiritual actings that tend unto eternal life. Such are the thoughts of them that are spiritually minded. They arise from the *inward* principle, inclination, and disposition of the soul,—are the bubblings of this well of living water; they are the mindings of the Spirit.

So our Saviour describes them, Matt. xii. 35, "A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things." First, the *man* is good; as he said before, "Make the tree good, or the fruit cannot be good," verse 33. He is made so by grace, in the change and renovation of his nature; for in ourselves we are every way evil. This good man hath a treasure in his heart. So all men have; as the next words are, "The evil man out of the evil treasure of the heart." And this is the great difference that is between men in this world. Every man hath a treasure in his heart; that is, a prevailing, inexhaustible principle of all his actings and operations. But in some this treasure is good, in others it is evil; that is, the prevailing principle in the heart, which carries along with it its dispositions and inclinations, is in some good and gracious, in others it is evil. Out of his good treasure a good man bringeth forth good things. The first opening of it, the first bringing of it forth, is by these thoughts. The thoughts that arise out of the heart are of the same nature with the treasure that is in it. If the thoughts that naturally arise and spring up in us are for the most part vain, foolish, sensual, earthly, selfish, such is the treasure that is in our hearts, and such are we; but where the thoughts that thus naturally proceed from the treasure that is in the heart are spiritual and holy, it is an argument that we are spiritually minded.

Where it is not thus with our thoughts, they give no such evidence as that inquired after. Men may have thoughts of spiritual things, and that many of them, and that frequently, which do not

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arise from this principle, but may be resolved into two other causes; —1. Inward force; 2. Outward occasions.

1. *Inward force*, as it may be called. This is by *convictions*. Convictions put a kind of a force upon the mind, or an impression that causeth it to act contrary unto its own habitual disposition and inclination. It is in the nature of water to descend; but apply an instrument unto it that shall make a compression of it and force it unto a vent, it will fly upwards vehemently, as if that were its natural motion. But so soon as the force of the impression ceaseth, it returns immediately unto its own proper tendency, descending towards its centre. So is it with men's thoughts ofttimes. They are earthly,—their natural course and motion is downwards unto the earth and the things thereof; but when any efficacious conviction presseth on the mind, it forceth the egress of its thoughts upwards towards heavenly things. It will think much and frequently of them, as if that were their proper motion and course; but so soon as the power of conviction decays or wears off, that the mind is no more sensible of its force and impression, the thoughts of it return again unto their old course and track, as the water tends downwards.

This state and frame is graphically described, Ps. lxxviii. 34–37, "When he slew them, then they sought him: and they returned and inquired early after God. And they remembered that God was their rock, and the high God their redeemer. Nevertheless they did flatter him with their mouth, and they lied unto him with their tongues. For their heart was not right with him, neither were they steadfast in his covenant." Men in troubles, dangers, sickness, fears of death, or under effectual conviction of sin from the preaching of the word, will endeavour to think and meditate on spiritual things; yea, they will be greatly troubled that they cannot think of them more than they do, and esteem it their folly that they think of any thing else: but as freedom and deliverance do approach, so these thoughts decay and disappear; the mind will not be compelled to give place unto them any more. The prophet gives the reason of it, Jer. xiii. 23, "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil." They have had another haunt, been taught another course, the habit and inclination of the mind lies another way, and they will no longer tend towards spiritual things than an impression is on them from their convictions.

And it is an argument of very mean attainments, of a low and weak degree in this frame of heart, or in our being spiritually minded, when our thoughts of spiritual things do rise or fall according unto renewed occasional convictions. If when we are under rebukes from God in our persons or relations, in fears of death and the like, and

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withal have some renewed convictions of sin in commission, for omission of duties, and thereon do endeavour to be more spiritually minded in the constant exercise of our thoughts on spiritual things, which we fail in, and these thoughts decay as our convictions in the causes of them do wear off or are removed, we have attained a very low degree in this grace, if we have any interest in it at all.

Water that riseth and floweth from a living spring runneth equally and constantly, unless it be obstructed or diverted by some violent opposition; but that which is from *thunder-showers* runs furiously for a season, but is quickly dried up. So are those spiritual thoughts which arise from a prevalent internal principle of grace in the heart; they are even and constant, unless an interruption be put upon them for a season by temptations. But those which are excited by *the thunder of convictions*, however their streams may be filled for a season, they quickly dry up and utterly decay.

2. Such thoughts may arise in the minds of men not spiritually minded, from *outward means and occasions*. Such I intend as are indeed useful, yea, appointed of God for this end among others, that they may ingenerate and stir up holy thoughts and affections in us. But there is a difference in their use and operation. In some they excite the inward principle of the mind to act in holy thoughts, according unto its own sanctified disposition and prevalent affections. This is their proper end and use. In others they occasionally suggest such thoughts unto the minds of men, which spring only from the notions of the things proposed unto them. With respect unto this end also they are of singular use unto the souls of men. Howbeit such thoughts do not prove men to be spiritually minded. When you till and manure your land, if it brings forth plentiful crops of corn, it is an evidence that the soil itself is good and fertile; the dressing of it only gives occasion and advantage to put forth its own fruit-bearing virtue. But if in the tilling of land, you lay much dung upon it, and it brings forth here and there a handful where the dung lay, you will say, "The soil is barren; it brings forth nothing of itself." These means that we shall treat of are as the tilling of a fruitful soil, which helps it in bringing forth its fruit, by exciting its own virtue and power;—they stir up holy affections unto holy thoughts and desires. But in others, whose hearts are barren, they only serve, as it were, some of them here and there, to stir up spiritual thoughts, which gives no evidence of a gracious heart or spirit. But because this is a matter of great importance, it shall be handled distinctly by itself.

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CHAPTER III.

Outward means and occasions of such thoughts of spiritual things as do not prove men to be spiritually minded—Preaching of the word—Exercise of gifts—Prayer—How we may know whether our thoughts of spiritual things in prayer are truly spiritual thoughts, proving us to be spiritually minded.

1. SUCH a means is *the preaching of the word* itself. It is observed concerning many in the gospel, that they heard it willingly, received it with joy, and did many things gladly, upon the preaching of it; and we see the same thing exemplified in multitudes every day. But none of these things can be without many thoughts in the minds of such persons about the spiritual things of the word; for they are the effects of such thoughts, and, being wrought in the minds of men, will produce more of the same nature: yet were they all hypocrites concerning whom these things are spoken, and were never spiritually minded.

The cause of this miscarriage is given us by our Saviour, Matt. xiii. 20, 21, "He that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it; yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while." The good thoughts they have proceed not from any principle in themselves. Neither their affections nor their thoughts of these things have any internal root whereon they should grow. So is it with many who live under the present dispensation of the gospel. They have thoughts of spiritual things continually suggested unto them, and they do abide with them more or less, according as they are affected: for I speak not of them who are either despisers of what they hear, or wayside hearers, who understand nothing of what they hear, and immediately lose all sense of it, all thoughts about it; but I speak of them who attend with some diligence, and receive the word with some joy. These insensibly grow in knowledge and understanding, and therefore cannot be without some thoughts of spiritual things. Howbeit for the most part they are, as was said, but like unto waters that run after a shower of rain. They pour out themselves, as if they proceeded from some strong, living spring, whereas indeed they have none at all. When once the waters of the shower are spent, their channel is dry, there is nothing in it but stones and dirt. When the doctrine of the word falls on such persons as showers of rain, it gives a course, sometimes greater, sometimes less, unto their thoughts towards spiritual things; but they have not a well of water in them springing up into everlasting life. Wherefore, after a while their minds are dried up from such thoughts; nothing remains in them but earth, and that perhaps foul and dirty.

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It must be observed, that the best of men, the most holy and spiritually minded, may have, nay, ought to have, their thoughts of spiritual things excited, multiplied, and confirmed, by the preaching of the word. It is one end of its dispensation, one principal use of it in them by whom it is received. And it hath this effect two ways:—(1.) As it is *the spiritual food* of the soul, whereby its principle of life and grace is maintained and strengthened. The more this is done, the more shall we thrive in being spiritually minded. (2.) As *it administereth occasion* unto the exercise of grace; for, proposing the proper object of faith, love, fear, trust, reverence, unto the soul, it draws forth all those graces into exercise. Wherefore, although the vigorous actings of spiritual thoughts be occasional from the word, be more under and after the preaching of it than at other times, it is no more but what ariseth from the nature and use of the ordinance by God's own appointment, nor is it any evidence that those with whom it is so are not spiritually minded, but, on the contrary, that they are. Yet where men have no other thoughts of this matter but what are occasioned by the outward dispensation of the word, such thoughts do not prove them to be spiritually minded. Their endeavours in them are like those of men in a dream. Under some oppression of their spirits, their imagination fixeth on some thing or other that is most earnestly to be desired or avoided. Herein they seem to themselves to strive with all their might, to endeavour to go, run, or contend; but all in vain,—every thing fails them, and they are not relieved until they are awaked. So, such persons, in impressions they receive from the word, seem to strive and contend in their thoughts and resolutions to comply with what is proposed unto them; but their strength fails, they find no success for want of a principle of spiritual life, and after a time give over their endeavours until they are occasionally renewed again. Now, the thoughts which, in the dispensation of the word, do proceed from an inward principle of grace, excited unto its due exercise, are distinguishable from them which are only occasionally suggested unto the mind by the word outwardly preached; for,—(1.) They are *especial actings of faith and love* towards the things themselves that are preached. They belong unto our receiving the truth in the love thereof; and love respects the goodness of the things themselves, and not merely the truth of the propositions wherein they are expressed. The other thoughts are only the sense of the mind as affected with light and truth, without any cordial love unto the things themselves. (2.) They are accompanied with *complacency* of soul, arising from love, and experience, more or less, of the power of them, and their suitableness unto the new nature or principle of grace in them; for when our minds find that so indeed it is in us as it is in the word, that this

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is that which we would be more conformable unto, it gives a secret complacency, with satisfaction, unto the soul. The other thoughts, which are only occasional, have none of these concomitants or effects, but are dry and barren, unless it be in a few words or transient discourse. (3.) The former are means of *spiritual growth*. So some say the natural growth of vegetables is not by insensible motion, but by gusts and sensible eruptions of increase. These are both in spiritual growth, and the latter consists much in those thoughts which the principle of the new nature is excited unto by the word in the latter.

2. The *duty of prayer* is another means of the like nature. One principal end of it is to excite, stir up, and draw forth, the principle of grace, of faith and love in the heart, unto a due exercise in holy thoughts of God and spiritual things, with affections suitable unto them. Those who design not this end in prayer know not at all what it is to pray. Now, all sorts of persons have frequent occasion to join with others in prayer, and many are under the conviction that it is their own duty to pray every day, it may be, in their families and otherwise. And it is hard to conceive how men can constantly join with others in prayer, much more how they can pray themselves, but that they must have thoughts of spiritual things every day; howbeit, it is possible that they may have no root or living spring of them in themselves, but they are only occasional impressions on their minds from the outward performance of the duty. I shall give some instances of the grounds hereof, which, on many reasons, require our diligent consideration:—

(1.) Spiritual thoughts may be raised in a person in his own duty, *by the exercise of his gifts*, when there is no acting of grace in them at all; for they lead and guide the mind unto such things as are the matter of prayer,—that is, spiritual things. Gifts are nothing but a spiritual improvement of our natural faculties or abilities; and a man cannot speak or utter any thing but what proceeds from his rational faculties, by invention or memory, or both, managed in and by his thoughts, unless he speak by rote and that which is not rational. What, therefore, proceeds from a man's rational faculty in and by the exercise of his gifts, that his thoughts must be exercised about.

A man may *read a long prayer* that expresseth spiritual things, and yet never have one spiritual thought arise in his mind about them; for there is no exercise of any faculty of his mind required unto such reading, but only to attend unto the words that are to be read. This I say *may* be so; I do not say that it is always so, or that it must be so. But, as was said, in the exercise of gifts, it is impossible but there must be *an exercise of reason*, by invention,

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judgment, and memory, and consequently thoughts of spiritual things; yet may they all be merely occasional, from the present external performance of the duty, without any living spring or exercise of grace. In such a course may men of tolerable gifts continue all their days, unto the satisfaction of themselves and others, deceiving both them and their own souls.

This being evident from the Scripture and experience, an inquiry may be made thereon as unto our own concernment in these things, especially of those who have received spiritual gifts of their own, and of them also in some degree who usually enjoy the gifts of others in this duty; for it may be asked how we shall know whether the thoughts which we have of spiritual things in and upon prayer do arise from gifts only, those of our own or other men's, giving occasion unto them, or are influenced from a living principle and spring of grace in our hearts. A case this is (however by some it may be apprehended) of great importance, and which would require much time fully to resolve; for there is nothing whereby the refined sort of hypocrites do more deceive themselves and others, nothing whereby some men do give themselves more countenance in an indulgence unto their lusts, than by this part of the form of godliness, when they deny the power thereof. And, besides, it is that wherein the best of believers ought to keep a diligent watch over themselves in every particular instance of the performance of this duty. With respect hereunto, in an especial manner, are they to watch unto prayer. If they are at any time negligent herein, they may rest in a bare exercise of gifts, when, on a due examination and trial, they have no evidence of the acting of grace in what they have done. I shall, therefore, with what brevity I can, give a resolution unto this inquiry; and to this end observe,—

It is an ancient complaint, that *spiritual things are filled with great obscurity and difficulty;* and it is true. Not that there is any such thing in themselves, for they all come forth from the Father of lights, and are full of light, order, beauty, and wisdom; and light and order are the only means whereby any thing makes a discovery of itself. But the ground of all darkness and difficulty in these things lies in ourselves. We can more clearly and steadily see and behold the *moon* and the *stars* than we can the *sun* when it shines in its greatest lustre. It is not because there is more light in the moon and stars than in the sun, but because the light of the sun is greater than our visive faculty can directly bear and behold. So we can more clearly discover the truth and distinct nature of things moral and natural, than we can of things that are heavenly and spiritual. See John iii. 12. Not that there is more substance or reality in them, but because the ability of our understanding is more

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suited unto the comprehension of them; the others are above us. We know but in part, and our minds are liable to be hindered and disordered in their apprehension of things heavenly and spiritual by ignorance, temptations, and prejudices of all sorts. In nothing are men more subject unto mistakes than in the application of things unto themselves, and a judgment of their interest in them. Fear, self-love, with the prevalency of temptations and corruptions, do all engage their powers to darken the light of the mind and to pervert its judgment. In no case doth the deceitfulness of the heart, or of sin (which is all one), more act itself. Hence multitudes say "Peace" to themselves to whom God doth not speak peace; and some who are children of light do yet walk in darkness. Hence is that fervent prayer of the apostle for help in this case, Eph. i. 15–19. There is also a great similitude between *temporary* faith and that which is *saving* and *durable*, and between gifts and graces in their operations; which is that that is under present consideration. It is acknowledged, therefore, that without the especial light and conduct of the Spirit of God, no man can make such a judgment of his state and his actions as shall be a stable foundation of giving glory to God and of obtaining peace unto his own soul; and therefore the greatest part of mankind do constantly deceive themselves in these things.

But, ordinarily, under this blessed conduct in the search of ourselves and the concernments of our duty, we may come unto a satisfaction whether they are influenced by faith and have grace exercised in them, especially this duty of prayer, or whether it derive from *the power of our natural faculties*, raised by light and spiritual gifts only; and so whether our spiritual thoughts therein do spring from a vital principle of grace, or whether they come from occasional impressions on the mind by the performance of the duty itself.

If men are willing to *deceive themselves*, or to hide themselves from themselves, to walk with God at all peradventures, to leave all things at hazard, to put off all trials unto that at the last day, and so never call themselves unto an account as unto the nature of their duties in any particular instance, it is no wonder if they neither do nor can make any distinction in this matter as unto the true nature of their thoughts in spiritual duties. Two things are required hereunto:—

[1.] That we impartially and severely *examine and try* the frames and actings of our minds in holy duties by the word of truth, and thereon be not afraid to speak that plainly unto our souls which the word speaks unto us. This diligent search ought to respect our principles, aims, ends, actings, with the whole deportment of our souls in every duty. See 2 Cor. xiii. 5. If a man receive much

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money, and look only on the outward form and superscription, when he supposeth that he hath great store of current coin in gold and silver, he may have only heaps of lead or copper by him; but he that trades in it as the comfort and support of his natural life and condition, he will try what he receives both by the balance and the touchstone, as the occasion requires, especially if it be in a time when much adulterated coin is passant in the world. And if a man reckon on his duties by tale and number, he may be utterly deceived, and be spiritually poor and a bankrupt, when he esteems himself rich, increased in goods, and wanting nothing. Some duties may appearingly hold in the balance as to weight, which will not hold it at the touchstone as to worth. Both means are to be used, if we would not be mistaken in our accounts. Thus God himself, in the midst of a multitude of duties, calls the people to try and examine themselves whether or no they are such as have faith and grace in them, and so like to have acceptance with him, Isa. lviii. 2–7.

[2.] Add we must unto our own diligent inquiry *fervent prayers* unto God that he would search and try us as unto our sincerity, and discover unto us the true frame of our hearts. Hereof we have an express example, Ps. cxxxix. 23, 24, "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." This is the only way whereby we may have the Spirit of God witnessing unto our sincerity with our own spirits. There is need of calling in divine assistance in this matter, both from the importance of it and from its difficulty, God alone knowing fully and perfectly what is in the hearts of men.

I no way doubt but that, in the impartial use of these means, a man may come to assured satisfaction in his own mind, such as wherein he shall not be deceived, whether he doth animate and quicken his thoughts of spiritual things in duties with inward vital grace, or whether they are impressions on his mind by the occasion of the duty.

A duty this is of great importance and necessity, now hypocrisy hath made so great an inroad on profession, and gifts have defloured grace in its principal operations. No persons are in greater danger of walking at hazard with God than those who live in the exercise of spiritual gifts in duties unto their own satisfaction and [that of] others; for they may countenance themselves with an appearance of every thing that should be in them in reality and power, when there is nothing of it in them. And so it hath fallen out. We have seen many earnest in the exercise of this gift who have turned vile and debauched apostates. Some have been known to live in sin and in indulgence of their lusts, and yet to abide constant in their duties, Isa. i. 10–15.

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And we may hear prayers sometimes that openly discover themselves unto spiritual sense to be the labour of the brain, by the help of gifts in memory and invention, without an evidence of any mixture of humility, reverence, or godly fear, without any acting of faith and love. They flow as wine, yet smell and taste of the unsavoury cask from whence they proceed. It is necessary, therefore, that we should put ourselves on the *severest* trial, lest we should be found not to be spiritually minded in spiritual duties.

Gifts are gracious vouchsafements of Christ to make grace useful unto ourselves and others; yea, they may make them useful unto the grace of others who have no grace in themselves. But as unto our own souls, they are of no other advantage or benefit but to stir up grace unto its proper exercise, and to be a vehicle to carry it on in its proper use. If we do not always regard this in their exercise, we had better be without them. If instead hereof they once begin to impose themselves practically upon us, so as that we rest in spiritual light acting our inventions, memories, and judgments, with a ready utterance, or such as it is, there is no form of prayer can be more prejudicial unto our souls. As wine, if taken moderately and seasonably, helps the stomach in digestion, and quickens the natural spirits, enabling the powers of nature unto their duty, [and] is useful and helpful unto it; but if it be taken in excess it doth not help nature, but oppress it, and takes on itself to do what nature should be assisted unto, it fills men's carcasses with diseases as well as their souls with sin: so whilst spiritual gifts are used and employed only to excite, aid, and assist grace in its operations, they are unutterably useful; but if they put themselves in the room thereof, to do all that grace should do, they are hurtful and pernicious. We have need, therefore, to be very diligent in this inquiry whether our spiritual thoughts, even in our prayers, be not rather *occasioned* from the duty than spring from a *gracious principle* in our hearts, or are the actings of real saving grace.

(2.) Where thoughts of spiritual things in *prayer* are *occasional only*, in the way before described, such prayers will not be a means of spiritual growth unto the soul. They will not make the soul humble, holy, watchful, and diligent in universal obedience. Grace will not thrive under the greatest constancy in such duties. It is an astonishing thing to see how, under frequency of prayer and a seeming fervency therein, many of us are at a stand as to visible thriving in the fruits of grace, and it is to be feared without any increase of strength in the root of it. "The LORD'S hand is not shortened that it cannot save, nor his ear heavy that it cannot hear." He is the same as in the days of old, when our fathers cried unto him and were delivered, when they trusted in him and were not confounded.

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"Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." Prayer is the same that it was, and shall lose nothing of its prevalency whilst this world endureth. Whence is it, then, that there is so much prayer amongst us, and so little success? I speak not with respect unto the outward dispensations of divine providence, in afflictions or persecutions, wherein God always acts in a way of sovereignty, and ofttimes gives the most useful answer unto our prayers by denying our requests; I intend that only whereof the psalmist giveth us his experience, Ps. cxxxviii. 3, "In the day when I cried thou answeredst me, and strengthenedst me with strength in my soul." Where prayers are effectual, they will bring in spiritual strength. But the prayers of many seem to be very spiritual, and to express all conceivable supplies of grace, and they are persisted in with constancy,—and God forbid we should judge them to be hypocritical and wholly insincere,—yet there is a defect somewhere, which should be inquired after, for they are not so answered as that they who pray them are strengthened with strength in their souls. There is not that spiritual thriving, that growth in grace, which might be expected to accompany such supplications.

I know that a man may pray often, pray sincerely and frequently, for an *especial mercy*, grace, or deliverance from a particular temptation, and yet no spiritual supply of strength unto his own experience come in thereby. So Paul prayed thrice for the removal of his temptation, and yet had the exercise of it continued. In such a case there may be no defect in prayer, and yet the grace in particular aimed at may not be attained; for God hath other holy ends to accomplish hereby on the soul. But how persons should continue in prayer in general according to the mind of God, so far as can be outwardly discovered, and yet thrive not at all as unto spiritual strength in their souls, is hard to be understood.

And, which is yet more astonishable, men abide in the duty of prayer, and that with constancy, in their families and otherwise, and yet live in known sins. Whatever spiritual thoughts such men have in and by their prayers, they are not spiritually minded. Shall we now say that all such persons are gross hypocrites, such as know they do but mock God and man,—know that they have not desires nor aims after the things which they mention in their own prayers, but do these things either for some corrupt end or at best to satisfy their convictions? Could we thus resolve, the whole difficulty of the case were taken off; for such "double-minded men" have no reason to "think that they shall receive any thing of the Lord," as James speaks, chap. i. 7. Indeed they do not;—they never act faith with reference unto their own prayers. But it is not so with all of this sort. Some judge themselves sincere and in good earnest in their

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prayers,—not without some hopes and expectations of success. I will not say of all such persons that they are among the number of them concerning whom the Wisdom of God says, "Because I called, and they refused; they shall call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me," Prov. i. 24, 28. And although we may say unto such a person in general, "Either leave your sinning or leave your praying," from Ps. l. 16, 17, and that with respect unto present scandal and certain miscarriage in the end if both be continued in, yet in particular I would not advise any such person to leave off his praying until he had left his sin. This were to advise a sick man to use no remedies until he were well cured. Who knows but that the Holy Spirit, who works when and how he pleaseth, may take a time to animate these lifeless prayers, and make them a means of deliverance from the power of this sin? In the meantime, the fault and guilt is wholly their own, who have effected a consistency between a way in sinning and a course in praying; and it ariseth from hence, that they have never laboured to fill up their requests with grace. What there hath been of earnestness or diligence in them hath been from a force put upon them by their convictions and fears; for no man was ever absolutely prevailed on by sin who prayed for deliverance according to the mind of God. Every praying man that perisheth was a hypocrite. The faithfulness of God in his promises will not allow us to judge otherwise. Wherefore, the thoughts that such persons have of spiritual things, even in their duties, do not arise from within nor are a natural emanation of the frames of their hearts and affections.

(3.) *Earnestness and appearing fervency in prayer*, as unto the outward delivery of the words of it, yea, though the mind be so affected as to contribute much thereunto, will not of themselves prove that the thoughts of men therein do arise from an internal spring of grace. There is a fervency of spirit in prayer that is one of the best properties of it, being an earnest acting of love, faith, and desire; but there is a fervency wherewith the mind itself may be affected that may arise from other causes:—

[1.] It may do so from the engagement of *natural affections* unto the objects of their prayer, or the things prayed for. Men may be mighty earnest and intent in their minds in praying for a dear relation or for deliverance from eminent troubles or imminent dangers, and yet all this fervour may arise from the vehement actings of natural affections about the things prayed for, excited in an especial manner by the present duty. Hence God calls the earnest cries of some for temporal things, not a "crying unto him," but a "howling," Hos. vii. 14; that is, the cry of hungry, ravenous beasts, that would be satisfied.

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[2.] Sometimes it ariseth from the *sharpness of convictions*, which will make men even roar in their prayers for disquietment of heart. And this may be where there is no true grace as yet received, nor, it may be, ever will be so; for the perplexing work of conviction goes before real conversion. And as it produceth many other effects and changes in the mind, so it may do this of great fervency in vocal prayers, especially if it be accompanied with outward afflictions, pains, or troubles, Ps. lxxviii. 34, 35.

[3.] Ofttimes the mind and affections are very little concerned in that fervour and earnestness which appear in the *outward performance* of the duty; but in the exercise of gifts, and through their own utterance, men put their natural affections into such an agitation as shall carry them out into a great vehemency in their expressions. It hath been so with sundry persons, who have been discovered to be rotten hypocrites, and have afterward turned cursed apostates. Wherefore, all these things may be where there is no gracious spring or vital principle acting itself from within in spiritual thoughts.

Some, it may be, will design an advantage by these conceptions, unto the interest of profaneness and scoffing; for if there may be these evils under the exercise of the gift of prayer, both in constancy and with fervency,—if there may be a total want of the exercise of all true grace with it and under it,—then, it may be, all that is pretended of this gift and its use is but hypocrisy and talk. But I say, —(1.) It may be as well pretended that because the sun shining on a dunghill doth occasion offensive and noisome steams, therefore all that is said of its influence on spices and flowers, causing them to give out their fragrancy, is utterly false. No man ever thought that spiritual gifts did change or renew the minds and natures of men; where they are alone, they only help and assist unto the useful exercise of natural faculties and powers. And therefore, where the heart is not savingly renewed, no gifts can stir up a saving exercise of faith; but where it is so, they are a means to cause the savour of it to flow forth. (2.) Be it so that there may be some evils found under the exercise of the gift of prayer, what remedy for them may be proposed? Is it that men should renounce their use of it, and betake themselves unto the reading of prayers only? [1.] The same may be said of *all spiritual gifts* whatever, for they are all of them liable unto abuse. And shall we reject all the powers of the world to come, the whole complex of gospel gifts, for the communication whereof the Lord Christ hath promised to continue his Spirit with his church unto the end of the world, because by some they are abused? [2.] Not only the same, but far greater evils, may be found in and under the reading of prayers; which needs no

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farther demonstration than what it gives of itself every day. [3.] It is hard to understand how any benefit at all can accrue unto any by this relief, when the advantages of the other way are evident.

Wherefore the inquiry remains, *How we may know unto our own satisfaction that the thoughts we have of spiritual things in the duty of prayer are from an internal fountain of grace,* and so are an evidence that we are spiritually minded, whereunto all these things do tend. Some few things I shall offer towards satisfaction herein:—

(1.) I take it for granted, on the evidence before given, that persons who have any spiritual light, and will diligently examine and try their own hearts, will be able to discern what real actings of faith, of love, and delight in God, there are in their duties, and, consequently, what is the spring of their spiritual thoughts. In general we are assured that "he that believeth hath the witness in himself," 1 John v. 10. Sincere faith will be its own evidence; and where there are sincere actings of faith, they will evidence themselves, if we try all things impartially by the word. But if men do, as for the most part they do, content themselves with the performance of any duty, without an examination of their principles, frames, and actings of grace in it, it is no wonder if they walk in all uncertainty.

(2.) When the soul finds a sweet spiritual complacency in and after its duties, it is an evidence that grace hath been acted in its spiritual thoughts and desires. Jer. xxxi., the prophet receiveth a long gracious message from God, filled up with excellent promises and pathetical exhortations unto the church. The whole is, as it were, summed up in the close of it: Verse 25, "For I have satiated the weary soul, and I have replenished every sorrowful soul." Whereon the prophet adds, "Upon this I awaked, and beheld; and my sleep was sweet unto me." God's gracious message had so composed his spirit and freed his mind from trouble as that he was at quiet repose in himself, like a man asleep. But after the end of it, he stirs up himself unto a review and consideration of what had been spoken unto him: "I awaked, and beheld," or, "I stirred up myself, and considered what had been delivered unto me;" "and," saith he, "my sleep was sweet unto me,"—"I found a gracious complacency in and refreshment unto my soul from what I had heard and received." So is it ofttimes with a soul that hath had real communion with God in the duty of prayer. It finds itself, both in it and afterward when it is awakened unto the consideration of it, spiritually refreshed; it is sweet unto him.

This *holy complacency,* this rest and sweet repose of mind, is the foundation of the delight of believers in this duty. They do not pray only because it is their duty so to do, nor yet because they stand in need of it, so as that they cannot live without it, but they have

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delight in it; and to keep them from it is all one as to keep them from their daily food and refreshment. Now, we can have no delight in any thing but what we have found some sweetness, rest, and complacency in. Without any such experience we may do or use any thing, but cannot do it with delight. And it ariseth,—[1.] From the approach that is made unto God therein. It is in its own nature an access unto God on a throne of grace, Eph. ii. 18, Heb. x. 19, 20; and when this access is animated by the actings of grace, the soul hath a spiritual experience of a nearness in that approach. Now, God is the fountain and centre of all spiritual refreshment, rest, and complacency; and in such an access unto him there is a refreshing taste of them communicated unto the soul: Ps. xxxvi. 7–9, "How excellent is thy loving-kindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings. They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house; and thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures. For with thee is the fountain of life: in thy light shall we see light." God is proposed in the excellency of his loving-kindness, which is comprehensive of his goodness, grace, and mercy; and so he is also as the spring of life and light, all spiritual powers and joys. Those that believe are described by putting their "trust under the shadow of his wings." In his worship, the "fatness of his house," they make their approaches unto him. And the fruit hereof is, that he makes them to "drink of the river of his pleasures," the satisfying, refreshing streams of his grace and goodness. They approach unto him as unto the "fountain of life," so as to drink of that fountain in renewed communications of life and grace, and in the "light of God," the light of his countenance, to "see light" in satisfying joy. In these things doth consist, and from them doth arise, that spiritual complacency which the souls of believers do find in their duties. [2.] From the due exercise of faith, love, and delight, the graces wherein the life of the new creature doth principally consist. There is a suitableness unto our natural constitution, and a secret complacency of our natures, in the proper actings of life natural for its own preservation and increase. There is so in our spiritual constitution, in the proper actings of the powers of our spiritual life unto its preservation and increase. These graces, in their due exercise, do compose and refresh the mind, as those which are perfective of its state, and which quell and cast out whatever troubles it. Thence a blessed satisfaction and complacency befall the soul. Herein "he that believeth hath the witness in himself." Besides, faith and love are never really acted on Christ, but they prepare and make meet the soul to receive communications of love and grace from him; which it never faileth of, although it be not always sensible thereof. [3.] From the testimony of conscience, bearing witness

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unto our sincerity, both in aims, ends, and performances of the duty. Hence a gracious repose of mind and great satisfactoriness do ensue.

If we have no experience of these things, it is evident that we walk at random in the best of our duties; for they are among the principal things that we do or ought to pray for. And if we have not experience of the effects of our prayers in our hearts, we neither have advantage by them nor give glory unto God in them.

But yet here, as in most other spiritual things, one of the worst of vices is ready to impose itself in the room and place of *the best of our graces;* and this is *self-pleasing* in the performance of the duty. This, instead of a grace steeped in humility, as all true grace is, is a vile effect of spiritual pride, or the offering of a sacrifice unto our own net and drag. It is a glorying in the flesh; for whatever of self any doth glory in, it is but flesh. When men have had enlargements in their expressions, and especially when they apprehend that others are satisfied or affected therewith, they are apt to have a secret self-pleasing in what they have done; which, before they are aware, turns into pride and a noxious elation of mind. The same may befall men in their most secret duties, performed outwardly by the aid of spiritual gifts. But this is most remote from and contrary unto that spiritual complacency in duty which we speak of, which yet it will pretend unto until it be diligently examined. The language of spiritual complacency is, "I will go in the strength of the Lord GOD; I will make mention of thy righteousness, of thine only," Ps. lxxi. 16;—that of spiritual pride is, "God, I thank thee that I have done thus and thus;" as it was expressed by the Pharisee. That is in *God* alone; this is in *self.* That draws forth *the savour of all graces;* this immediately covereth and buries them all, if there be any in the soul. That fills the soul eminently with *humility* and self-abasement; this with a *lifting up of the mind* and proud self-conceit. That casts out all remembrance of what *we have done ourselves,* retaining only a sense of what *we have received from God,* of the impressions of his love and grace; this blots out all remembrance of what we have freely received from God, and retains only what we have done ourselves. Wherever it is, there is no due sense either of the greatness or goodness of God.

Some, it may be, will say that if it be so, they for their parts are cut off. They have no experience of any such spiritual rest and complacency in God in or after their prayers. At the best, they begin them with tears and end them with sorrow; and sometimes they know not what is become of them, but fear that God is not glorified by them nor their own souls bettered.

I answer,—[1.] There is great *spiritual refreshment* in that godly sorrow which is at work in our prayers. Where the Holy Ghost is

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a Spirit of grace and supplication, he causeth mourning, and in that mourning there is joy. [2.] The secret encouragement which we receive, by praying, to adhere unto God constantly in prayer ariseth from some experience of this *holy complacency*, though we have not a sensible evidence of it. [3.] Perhaps some of them who make this complaint, if they would awaken and consider, will find that their souls, at least sometimes, have been thus refreshed and brought unto a holy rest in God. [4.] Then shall ye know the Lord, if ye follow on to know him. Abide in seeking after this complacency and satisfaction in God, and ye shall attain it.

(3.) It is a sure evidence that our thoughts of spiritual things in our supplications are from an internal spring of grace, and are not merely occasioned by the duty itself, when we find *the daily fruit and advantage of them*, especially in the preservation of our souls in a holy, humble, watchful frame.

Innumerable are the advantages, benefits, and effects of prayer, which are commonly spoken unto. Growth in grace and consolation is the substance of them. Where there is continuance in prayer, there will be spiritual growth in some proportion. For men to be earnest in prayer and thriftless in grace is a certain indication of prevalent corruptions, and want of being spiritually minded in prayer itself. If a man eat his daily food, let him eat never so much or so often, if he be not nourished by it, his body is under the power of prevalent distempers; and so is his spiritual constitution who thriveth not in the use of the food of the new creature. But that which I fix upon, with respect unto the present inquiry, is the frame that it preserves the soul in. It will keep it humble and upon a diligent watch as unto its dispositions and actings. He who prays as he ought will endeavour to live as he prays. This none can do who doth not with diligence keep his heart unto the things he hath prayed about. To pray *earnestly* and live *carelessly* is to proclaim that a man is not spiritually minded in his prayer. Hereby, then, we shall know what is the spring of those spiritual thoughts which our minds are exercised withal in our supplications. If they are influenced unto a constant, daily watch for the preservation of that frame of spirit, those dispositions and inclinations unto spiritual things, which we pray for, they are from an internal spring of grace. If there be generally an *unsuitableness* in our minds unto what we seem to contend for in our prayers, the gift may be in exercise, but the grace is wanting. If a man be every day on the exchange, and there talketh diligently and earnestly about merchandise and the affairs of trade, but when he comes home thinks no more of them, because, indeed, he hath nothing to do, no interest in them, he may be a very poor man notwithstanding his pretences; and he may be spiritually very poor

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who is on occasions fervent in prayer, if, when he retires into himself, he is not careful and diligent about the matter of it.

(4.) When *spiritual affections* and due preparation of heart unto the duty do excite and animate the gift of prayer, and not the gift make impressions on the affections, then are we spiritually minded therein. Gifts are servants, not *rulers*, in the mind,—are bestowed on us to be *serviceable unto grace;* not to lead, but to follow it, and to be ready with their assistance on its exercise. For the most part, where they lead all, they are all alone. This is the natural order of these things: *grace* habitually inclineth and disposeth the heart unto this duty; *providence* and *rule* give the occasions for its exercise; *sense of duty* calls for preparation. *Grace* coming into actual exercise, *gifts* come in with their assistance. If they lead, all, all is out of order. It may be otherwise sometimes. A person indisposed and lifeless, engaging unto prayer in a way of obedience, upon conviction of duty, may, in and by the gift, have his affections excited and grace engaged unto its proper work. It *may* be so, I say, but let men take heed how they trust unto this order and method; for where it is so, there may be little or nothing of the exercise of true grace in all their fervour and commotion of affections. But when the genuine actings of faith, love, holy reverence, and gracious desires, do stir up the gift unto its exercise, calling in its assistance unto the expression of themselves, then are the heart and mind in their proper order.

(5.) It is so when other duties of religion are equally regarded and attended unto with prayer itself. He whose religion lies all in prayer and hearing, hath none at all. God hath an equal respect unto all other duties, and so must we have also. So is it expressed as unto the instance of alms, Acts x. 31; and James placeth all religion herein, because there is none without it, chap. i. 27. I shall not value his prayers at all, be he never so earnest and frequent in them, who gives not alms according to his ability. And this in an especial manner is required of us who are ministers, that we be not like a hand set up in cross-ways, directing others which way to go, but staying behind itself.

This digression about the *rise and spring of spiritual thoughts in prayer*, I judged not unnecessary in such a time and season, wherein we ought to be very jealous lest gifts impose themselves in the room of grace, and be careful that they are employed only unto their proper end, which is, to be serviceable unto grace in its exercise, and not otherwise.

3. There is *another occasion of thoughts of spiritual things*, when they do not spring from a living principle within, and so are no evidence of being spiritually minded; and this is the discourse of

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others. "They that fear the LORD will be speaking one to another" of the things wherein his glory is concerned, Mal. iii. 16. To declare the righteousness, the glory of God, is the delight of his saints: Ps. cxlv. 3–8, "Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised; and his greatness is unsearchable. One generation shall praise thy works to another, and shall declare thy mighty acts. I will speak of the glorious honour of thy majesty, and of thy wondrous works. And men shall speak of the might of thy terrible acts: and I will declare thy greatness. They shall abundantly utter the memory of thy great goodness, and shall sing of thy righteousness. The LORD is gracious, and full of compassion; slow to anger, and of great mercy." And accordingly there are some who are ready on all occasions to be speaking or making mention of things divine, spiritual, and holy; and it is to be wished that there were more of them. All the flagitious sins that the world is filled withal are not a greater evidence of the degeneracy of the Christian religion than this is, that it is grown unusual, yea, a shame or scorn, for men to speak together of the things of God. It was not so when religion was in its primitive power and glory, nor is it so with them who really fear God and are sensible of their duty. Some, I say, there are who embrace all occasions of spiritual communication. Those with whom they do converse, if they are not profligate, if they have any spiritual light, cannot but so far comply with what they say as to think of the things spoken, which are spiritual. Ofttimes the track and course of men's thoughts lie so out of the way, are so contrary unto such things, that they seem strange unto them, they give them no entertainment. You do but cross their way with such discourses, whereon they stand still a little, and so pass on. Even the countenances of some men will change hereon, and they betake themselves unto an unsatisfied silence until they can divert unto other things. Some will make such replies of empty words as shall evidence their hearts to be far enough estranged from the things proposed unto them. But with others, such occasional discourses will make such impressions on their minds as to stir up present thoughts of spiritual things. But though frequent occasions hereof may be renewed, yet will such thoughts give no evidence that any man is spiritually minded; for they are not genuine, from an internal spring of grace.

From these causes it is that the thoughts of spiritual things are with many as *guests* that come into an *inn*, and not like *children* that dwell in the *house*. They enter occasionally, and then there is a great stir about them, to provide meet entertainment for them. Within a while they are disposed of, and so depart unto their own occasions, being neither looked nor inquired after any more. Things of another nature are attended unto; new occasions bring in new

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guests for a season. Children are owned in the house, are missed if they are out of the way, and have their daily provision constantly made for them. So is it with these occasional thoughts about spiritual things. By one means or other they enter into the mind, and there are entertained for a season; on a sudden they depart, and men hear of them no more. But those that are natural and genuine, arising from a living spring of grace in the heart, disposing the mind unto them, are as the children of the house. They are expected in their places and at their seasons. If they are missing, they are inquired after. The heart calls itself unto an account whence it is that it hath been so long without them, and calls them over into its wonted converse with them.

CHAPTER IV.

Other evidences of thoughts about spiritual things arising from an internal principle of grace, whereby they are an evidence of our being spiritually minded —The abounding of these thoughts, how far, and wherein, such an evidence.

The SECOND evidence that our thoughts of spiritual things do proceed from an internal fountain of sanctified light and affections, or that they are acts or fruits of our being spiritually minded, is, *that they abound in us, that our minds are filled with them.* We may say of them as the apostle doth of other graces, "If these things be in you, and abound, ye shall not be barren." It is well, indeed, when our minds are like the land of Egypt in the years of plenty, when it "brought forth by handfuls,"—when they flow from the well of living water in us with a full stream and current; but there is a measure of abounding which is necessary to evidence our being spiritually minded in them.

There is a double effect ascribed here unto this frame of spirit,—first "life," and then "peace." The nature and being of this grace depend on the former consideration of it,—namely, its procedure from an internal principle of grace, the effect and consequence whereof is "life:" but that it is "peace" also depends on this degree and measure of the actings of this part of it in our spiritual thoughts; and this we must consider.

It is the character of all men in the state of depraved nature and apostasy from God, that "every imagination of the thoughts of their hearts is only evil continually," Gen. vi. 5. All persons in that condition are not swearers, blasphemers, drunkards, adulterers, idolaters, or the like; these are the vices of particular persons, the effects of particular constitutions and temptations. But thus it is with them, all and every one of them:—all the imaginations of the thoughts of

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their hearts are evil, and that continually, some as unto the matter of them, some as unto their end, all as unto their principle; for out of the evil treasure of the heart can proceed nothing but what is evil. That infinite multitude of open sins which is in the world doth give a clear prospect or representation of the nature and effects of our apostasy from God; but he that can consider the numberless number of thoughts which pass through the minds of every individual person every day, all evil, and that continually, he will have a farther comprehension of it.

We can therefore have no greater evidence of a change in us from this state and condition, than a change wrought in the *course of our thoughts*. A relinquishment of this or that *particular sin* is not an evidence of a translation from this state; for, as was said, such particular sins proceed from particular lusts and temptations, and are not the immediate universal consequence of that depravation of nature which is equal in all. Such alone are the vanity and wickedness of the thoughts and imaginations of the heart. A change herein is a blessed evidence of a change of state. He who is cured of a dropsy is not immediately healthy, because he may have the prevailing seeds and matter of other diseases in him, and the next day die of a lethargy; but he who, from a state of sickness, is restored, in the temperature of the mass of blood and the animal spirits, and all the principles of life and health, unto a good crisis and temperature, his state of body is changed. The cure of a particular sin may leave behind it the seeds of eternal death, which they may quickly effect; but he who hath obtained a change in this character, which belongs essentially unto the state of depraved nature, is spiritually recovered. And the more the stream of our thoughts is turned, the more our minds are filled by those of a contrary nature, the greater and more firm is our evidence of a translation out of that depraved state and condition.

There is nothing so unaccountable as *the multiplicity of thoughts* of the minds of men. They fall from them like the leaves of trees when they are shaken with the wind in autumn. To have all these thoughts, all the several figments of the heart, all the conceptions that are framed and agitated in the mind, to be evil, and that continually, what a hell of horror and confusion must it needs be! A deliverance from this loathsome, hateful state is more to be valued than the whole world. Without it neither life, nor peace, nor immortality, nor glory, can ever be attained.

The design of conviction is to put a stop unto these thoughts, to take off from their number, and thereby to lessen their guilt. It deserves not the name of conviction of sin which respects only outward actions, and regards not the inward actings of the mind; and

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this alone will for a season make a great change in the thoughts, especially it will do so when assisted by superstition, directing them unto other objects. These two in conjunction are the rise of all that devotional religion which is in the Papacy. Conviction labours to put some stop and bounds unto thoughts absolutely evil and corrupt, and superstition suggests other objects for them, which they readily embrace; but it is a vain attempt. The minds and hearts of men are continually minting and coining new thoughts and imaginations; the cogitative faculty is always at work. As the streams of a mighty river running into the ocean, so are the thoughts of a natural man, and through self they run into hell. It is a fond thing to set a dam before such a river, to curb its streams. For a little space there may be a stop made, but it will quickly break down all obstacles or overflow all its bounds. There is no way to divert its course but only by providing other channels for its waters, and turning them thereinto. The mighty stream of the evil thoughts of men will admit of no bounds or dams to put a stop unto them. There are but two ways of relief from them, the one respecting their *moral evil*, the other their *natural abundance*. The first [is,] by throwing salt into the spring, as Elisha cured the waters of Jericho,—that is, to get the heart and mind seasoned with grace; for the tree must be made good before the fruit will be so. The other is, to turn their streams into new channels, putting new aims and ends upon them, fixing them on new objects: so shall we abound in spiritual thoughts; for abound in thoughts we shall, whether we will or no.

To this purpose is the advice of the apostle, Eph. v. 18, 19, "Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs." When men are drunk with wine unto an excess, they make it quickly evident what vain, foolish, ridiculous imaginations it filleth their minds withal. In opposition hereunto the apostle adviseth believers to be "filled with the Spirit,"—to labour for such a participation of him as may fill their minds and hearts, as others fill themselves with wine. To what end, unto what purpose, should they desire such a participation of him, to be so filled with him? It is unto this end, namely, that he by his grace may fill them with holy, spiritual thoughts, as, on the contrary, men drunk unto an excess are filled with those that are foolish, vain, and wicked. So the words of verse 19 do declare; for he adviseth us to express our abounding thoughts in such duties as will give an especial vent unto them.

Wherefore, when we are spiritually minded, we shall abound in spiritual thoughts, or thoughts of spiritual things. That we have such thoughts will not sufficiently evidence that we are so, unless we abound in them. And this leads us unto the principal inquiry on

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this head, namely, what measure we ought to assign hereof, how we may know when we abound in spiritual thoughts, so as that they may be an evidence of our being spiritually minded.

I answer, in general, among other Scriptures read over Ps. cxix. with understanding. Consider therein what David expresseth of himself, as unto his constant delight in and continual thoughts of the law of God; which was the only means of divine revelation at that season. Try yourselves by that pattern; examine yourselves whether you can truly speak the same words with him, at least if not in the same degree of zeal, yet with the same sincerity of grace. You will say, "That was David. It is not for us, it is not our duty, to be *like* unto him, at least not to be *equal* with him." But as far as I know, we must be like him, if ever we intend to come to the place where he is. It will ruin our souls, if, when we read in the Scripture how the saints of God express their experience in faith, love, delight in God, and constant meditation on him, we grant that it was so with them, that they were good and holy men, but it is not necessary that it should be so with us. These things are not written in the Scripture to show what they were, but what we ought to be. All things concerning them were "written for our admonition," 1 Cor. x. 11. And if we have not the same delight in God as they had, the same spiritual mindedness in thoughts and meditations of heavenly things, we can have no evidence that we please God as they did, or shall go to that place whither they are gone. Profession of the life of God passeth with many at a very low and easy rate. Their thoughts are for the most part vain and earthly, their communication unsavoury, and sometimes corrupt, their lives at best uneven and uncertain as unto the rule of obedience; yet all is well, all is life and peace! The holy men of old, who obtained this testimony, that they pleased God, did not so walk before him. They meditated continually on the law; thought of God in the night seasons; spake of his ways, his works, his praise; their whole delight was in him, and in all things they "followed hard after him." It is the example of David in particular that I have proposed; and it is a promise of the grace to be administered by the gospel, that "he that is feeble shall be as David," Zech. xii. 8, and if we are not so in his being spiritually minded, it is to be feared we are not partakers of the promise. But that we may the better judge of ourselves therein, I shall add some few rules unto this direction by [way of] example:—

1. Consider *what proportion your thoughts of spiritual things bear unto those about other things.* Our principal interest and concern, as we profess, lies in things spiritual, heavenly, and eternal. Is it not, then, a foolish thing to suppose that our thoughts about these things should not hold some proportion with those about other

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things, nay, that they should not exceed them? No man is so vain, in earthly things, as to pretend that his principal concern lieth in that whereof he thinks very seldom in comparison of other things. It is not so with men in reference unto their families, their trades, their occasions of life. It is a truth not only consecrated by the testimony of him who is Truth, but evident also in the light of reason, that "where our treasure is, there will our hearts be also;" and the affections of our hearts do act themselves by the thoughts of our minds. Wherefore, if our principal treasure be, as we profess, in things spiritual and heavenly, (and woe unto us if it be not so!) on them will our affections, and consequently our desires and thoughts, be principally fixed.

That we may the better examine ourselves by this rule, we must consider of what sorts men's other thoughts are; and as unto our present purpose, they may be reduced unto these heads:—

(1.) There are such as are exercised about *their callings and lawful occasions*. These are numberless and endless, especially among a sort of men who rise early and go to bed late, and eat the bread of carefulness, or are particularly industrious and diligent in their ways. These thoughts men approve themselves in, and judge them their duty, as they are in their proper place and measure. But no heart can conceive the multitude of these thoughts, which partly in contrivances, partly in converse, are engaged and spent about these things; and the more men are immersed in them, the more do themselves and others esteem them diligent and praiseworthy. And there are some who have neither necessity nor occasion to be engaged much in the duties of any especial calling, who yet by their words and actions declare themselves to be confined almost in their thoughts unto *themselves*, their *relations*, their *children*, and their self-concerns; which, though most of them are very impertinent, yet they justify themselves in them. All sorts may do well to examine what proportion their thoughts of spiritual things do bear unto those of other things. I fear with most it will be found to be very small,—with many next to none at all. What evidence, then, can they have that they are spiritually minded, that their principal interest lies in things above? It may be, it will be asked, whether it be necessary that men should think *as much* and *as often* about things spiritual and heavenly as they do about the lawful affairs of their callings? I say, *more*, and *more often*, if we are what we profess ourselves to be. Generally it is the best sort of men, as to the things of God and man, who are busied in their callings, some of one sort, some of another. But even among the best of these, many will continually spend the strength of their minds and vigour of their spirits about their affairs all the day long, and, so they can pray in the morning

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and evening, with some thoughts sometimes of spiritual things occasionally administered, do suppose they acquit themselves very well; as if a man should pretend that his great design is to prepare himself for a voyage unto a far country, where is his patrimony and his inheritance, but all his thoughts and contrivances are about some few trifles, which, if indeed he intend his voyage, he must leave behind him, and of his main design he scarce thinketh at all. We all profess that we are bound for heaven, immortality, and glory; but is it any evidence we really design it, if all our thoughts are consumed about the trifles of this world, which we must leave behind us, and if we have only occasional thoughts of things above? I shall elsewhere show, if God will, how men may be spiritually minded in their earthly affairs. If some relief may not be thence obtained, I cannot tell what to say or answer for them whose thoughts of spiritual things do not hold proportion with, yea, exceed, them which they lay out about their callings.

This whole rule is grounded on that of our Saviour, Matt. vi. 31, 33, 34, "Take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought for the morrow." When we have done all we can, when we have made the best of them we are able, all earthly things, as unto our interest in them, amount to no more but what we eat, what we drink, and wherewith we are clothed. About these things our Saviour forbids us to take any thought, not absolutely, but with a double limitation; as,—First, That we take no such thought about them as should carry along with it a *disquietude of mind*, through a distrust of the fatherly care and providence of God. This is the design of the context. Secondly, No thought that, for *constancy and engagement of spirit*, should be like unto those which we ought to have about spiritual things. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness." Let that be the principal thing in your thoughts and consciences. We may therefore conclude that at least they must hold an exceeding proportion with them.

Let a man industriously engaged in the way of his calling try himself by this rule every evening. Let him consider what have been his thoughts about his earthly occasions and what about spiritual things, and thereon ask of himself whether he be spiritually minded or no. Be not deceived; "as a man thinketh, so is he." And if we account it a strange thing that our thoughts should be more exercised about spiritual things than about the affairs of our callings, we must not think it strange if, when we come to the trial, we cannot find that we have either "life" or "peace."

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Moreover, it is known how often, when we are engaged in spiritual duties, *other thoughts* will interpose, and impose themselves on our minds. Those which are about men's secular concernments will do so. The world will frequently make an inroad on the way to heaven, to disturb the passengers and wayfaring men. There is nothing more frequently complained of by such as are awake unto their duty and sensible of their weakness. Call to mind, therefore, how often, on the other hand, spiritual thoughts do interpose, and, as it were, impose themselves on your minds whilst you are engaged in your earthly affairs. Sometimes no doubt but with all that are true believers it is so. "Or ever I was aware," saith the spouse, "my soul made me as the chariots of Ammi-nadib," Cant. vi. 12. Grace in her own soul surprised her into a ready, willing frame unto spiritual communion with Christ, when she was intent on other occasions. But if these thoughts of heavenly things so arising in us bear no proportion with the other sort, it is an evidence what frame and principle is predominant in us.

(2.) There are a *multitude of thoughts in the minds of men* which are *vain, useless*, and *altogether unprofitable*. These ordinarily, through a dangerous mistake, are looked on as not sinful, because, as it is supposed, the matter of them is not so; and therefore men rather shake them off for their folly than their guilt. But they arise from a corrupt fountain, and wofully pollute both the mind and conscience. Wherever there are "vain thoughts," there is sin, Jer. iv. 14. Such are those numberless imaginations whereby men fancy themselves *to be what they are not, to do what they do not, to enjoy what they enjoy not, to dispose of themselves and others* at their pleasure. That our nature is liable unto such a pernicious folly, which some of tenacious fancies have turned into madness, we are beholding alone to our cursed apostasy from God, and the vanity that possessed our minds thereon. Hence the prince of Tyrus thought he was a god, and "sat in the seat of God," Ezek. xxviii. 2. So it hath been with others. And in those in whom such imaginations are kept unto some better order and bounds, yet, being traced unto their original, they will be found to spring some of them immediately from pride, some from sensual lusts, some from the love of the world, all from self, and the old ambition to be as God, to dispose of all things as we think meet. I know no greater misery or punishment in this world than the debasing of our nature to such vain imaginations, and a perfect freedom from them is a part of the blessedness of heaven. It is not my present work to show how sinful they are; let them be esteemed only fruitless, foolish, vain, and ludicrous. But let men examine themselves what number of these vain, useless thoughts night and day do rove up and down in their minds. If now it be

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apprehended too severe, that men's thoughts of spiritual things should exceed them that are employed about their lawful callings, let them consider what proportion they bear unto those that are vain and useless. Do not many give more time unto them than they do unto holy meditations, without an endeavour to mortify the one or to stir up and enliven the other? are they not more wonted to their seasons than holy thoughts are? And shall we suppose that those with whom it is so are spiritually minded?

(3.) There are thoughts that are *formally evil;* they are so in their own nature, being corrupt contrivances to fulfil the desires of the flesh in the lusts thereof. These also will attempt the minds of believers. But they are always looked on as professed enemies to the soul, and are watched against. I shall not, therefore, make any comparison between them and spiritual thoughts, for they abound only in them that are carnally minded.

2. The second rule to this purpose is, That we should consider whether thoughts of spiritual things do *constantly take possession of their proper seasons.* There are some times and seasons in the course of men's lives wherein they retire themselves unto their own thoughts. The most busied men in the world have some times of thinking unto themselves; and those who design no such thing, as being afraid of coming to be wiser and better than they are, do yet spend time therein whether they will or no. But they who are wise will be at home as much as they can, and have as many seasons for such their retirements as is possible for them to attain. If that man be foolish who busieth himself so much abroad in the concerns of others that he hath no time to consider the state of his own house and family, much more is he so who spendeth all his thoughts about other things, and never makes use of them in an inquiry how it is with himself and his own soul. However, men can hardly avoid but that they must have some seasons, partly *stated,* partly *occasional,* wherein they entertain themselves with their own thoughts. The evening and the morning, the times of waking on the bed, those of the necessary cessation of all ordinary affairs, of walking, journeying, and the like, are such seasons.

If we are spiritually minded, if *thoughts of spiritual things do abound in us,* they will ordinarily, and that with constancy, possess these seasons, look upon them as those which are their due, which belong unto them; for they are expressly assigned unto them in the way of rule, expressed in examples and commands. See Ps. xvi. 7, 8, xcii. 2; Deut. vi. 7. If they are usually given up unto other ends and occasions, are possessed with thoughts of another nature, it is an open evidence that spiritual thoughts have but little interest in our minds, little prevalency in the conduct of our souls. It is our

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duty to afford unto them *stated times*, taken away from other affairs that call for them; but if, instead thereof, we rob them of what is as it were their own, which no other things or business can lay any just claim unto, how dwelleth the love of spiritual things in us? Most professors are convinced that it is their duty to pray morning and evening, and it is to be wished that they were all found in the practice of it; but if ordinarily they judge themselves in the performance of that duty to be discharged from any farther exercise of spiritual thoughts, applying them unto things worldly, useless, or vain, they can make no pretence to be spiritually minded.

And it must be observed (which will be found to be true), that if the seasons which are as it were due unto such meditations be taken from them, they will be the worst employed of all the minutes of our lives. Vain and foolish thoughts, corrupt imaginations, will make a common haunt unto the minds of men in them, and habituate themselves unto an expectation of entertainment, whence they will grow importunate for admission. Hence, with many, those precious moments of time which might greatly influence their souls unto life and peace, if they were indeed spiritually minded, make the greatest provision for their trouble, sorrow, and confusion; for the vain and evil thoughts which some persons do accustom themselves unto in such seasons are, or ought to be, a burden upon their consciences more than they can bear. That which providence tenders unto their good is turned into a snare; and God doth righteously leave them unto the fruits of their own folly who so despise his gracious provision for their good. If we cannot afford unto God our spare time, it is evident that indeed we can afford nothing at all. Micah ii. 1, "They devise iniquity upon their beds,"—the season proper for holy contemplation they make use of to fill their minds with wicked imaginations; "and when the morning is light they practise it," walking all day on all occasions suitably unto their devices and imaginations of the night. Many will have cause to complain unto eternity of those leisure times, which might have been improved for their advantage unto eternal blessedness.

If we intend, therefore, to maintain a title unto this grace of being spiritually minded, if we would have any evidence of it in ourselves,—without which we can have none of life or peace, and what we pretend thereof is but an effect of security,—we must endeavour to preserve the claim and right of spiritual thoughts unto such seasons, and actually put them in possession of them.

3. Consider how we are affected *with our disappointments about these seasons*. Have we by negligence, by temptations, have we by occasional diversions or affairs of life, been taken off from thoughts

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of God, of Christ, of heavenly things, when we ought to have been engaged in them? how are we affected with a view hereof? A carnal mind is well enough satisfied with the omission of any duty, so it have the pretence of a necessary occasion. If it hath lost a temporal advantage through attendance unto a spiritual duty, it will deeply reflect upon itself, and, it may be, like the duty the worse afterward. But a gracious soul, one that is truly spiritually minded, will mourn under a review of such omissions, and by every one of them is stirred up unto more watchfulness for the future. "Alas," will it say, "how little have I been with Christ this day! how much time hath passed me without a thought of him! How foolish was I to be wanting to such or such an opportunity! I am in arrears unto myself, and have no rest until I be satisfied."

I say, if indeed we are spiritually minded, we will duly and carefully call over the consideration of those times and seasons wherein we ought to have exercised ourselves in spiritual thoughts, and if we have lost them, or any of them, *mourn over our own negligence.* But if we can omit and lose such seasons or opportunities from time to time without regret or self-reflection, it is to be feared that we wax worse and worse. Way will be made hereby for farther omissions, until we grow wholly cold about them.

And, indeed, that woful *loss of time* that is found amongst many professors is greatly to be bewailed. Some lose it on themselves, by a continual track of fruitless, *impertinent thoughts* about their own concerns; some in vain converse with others, wherein for the most part they edify one another unto vanity. How much of this time might, nay ought to be redeemed for holy meditation! The good Lord make all professors sensible of their loss of former seasons, that they may be the more watchful for the future in this great concernment of their souls! Little do some think what light, what assurance, what joy, what readiness for the cross or for heaven, they might have attained, had they laid hold on all just seasons of exercising their thoughts about spiritual things which they have enjoyed, who now are at a loss in all, and surprised with every fear or difficulty that doth befall them.

This is the first thing that belongs unto our being spiritually minded: for although it doth not absolutely or essentially consist therein, yet it is inseparable from it, and the most undeceiving indication of it; and thus of abounding and abiding in thoughts about spiritual things, such as arise and spring naturally from a living principle, a spiritual frame and disposition of heart within.

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CHAPTER V.

The objects of spiritual thoughts, or what they are conversant about, evidencing them in whom they are to be spiritually minded—Rules directing unto steadiness in the contemplation of heavenly things—Motives to fix our thoughts with steadiness in them.

BEFORE I proceed unto the next general head, and which is the principal thing, the foundation of the grace and duty inquired after, some things must be spoken to render what hath been already insisted on yet more particularly useful; and this is, to inquire what are, or what ought to be, the *special objects* of those thoughts which, under the qualifications laid down, are the evidences of our being spiritually minded. And, it may be, we may be useful unto many herein, by helping them to fix their minds, which are apt to rove into all uncertainty: for this is befallen us, through the disorder and weakness of the faculties of our souls, that sometimes what the mind guides, leads, and directs unto, in things spiritual and heavenly, our wills and affections, through their depravation and corruption, will not comply withal, and so the good designings of the mind are lost; sometimes what the will and affections are inclined unto and ready for, the mind, through its weakness and inconstancy, cannot lead them to the accomplishment of. So to will is present with us, but how to perform that will we know not. So many are barren in this duty because they know not what to fix upon, nor how to exercise their thoughts when they have chosen a subject for their meditations. Hence they spend their time in fruitless desires that they could use their thoughts unto more purpose, rather than make any progress in the duty itself. They tire themselves, not because they are not willing to go, but because they cannot find their way. Wherefore, both these things shall be spoken unto, both what are the proper objects of our spiritual thoughts, and how we may be steady in our contemplation of them. And I shall unto this purpose first give some *general rules*, and then some *particular instances* in way of direction:—

1. Observe *the especial calls of providence*, and apply your minds unto thoughts of the duties required in them and by them. There is a voice in all signal dispensations of providence: "The LORD'S voice crieth unto the city, and the man of wisdom shall see thy name: hear ye the rod, and who hath appointed it," Micah vi. 9. There is a call, a cry in every rod of God, in every *chastising providence*, and therein [he] makes a declaration of his name, his holiness, his power, his greatness. This every *wise, substantial man* will

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labour to discern, and so comply with the call. God is greatly provoked when it is otherwise: "LORD, when thy hand is lifted up, they will not see: but they shall see, and be ashamed," Isa. xxvi. 11. If, therefore, we would apply ourselves unto our present duty, we are wisely to consider what is the voice of God in his present providential dispensations in the world. Hearken not unto any who would give another interpretation of them, but that they are plain declarations of his displeasure and indignation against the sins of men. Is not his wrath in them revealed from heaven against the ungodliness of men, especially such as retain the truth in unrighteousness, or false, hypocritical professors of the gospel? Doth he not also signally declare the uncertainty and instability of earthly enjoyments, from life itself to a shoe-latchet? as also how vain and foolish it is to adhere inordinately unto them? The fingers that appeared writing on the wall the doom of Belshazzar did it in characters that none could read, and words that none could understand, but Daniel; but the present call of God in these things is made plain upon tables, that he may run who readeth it. If the heavens gather blackness with clouds, and it thunder over us, if any that are on their journey will not believe that there is a storm coming, they must bear the severity of it.

Suppose, then, this to be the voice of providence, suppose there be in it these indications of the mind and will of God, what are the duties that we are called unto thereby? They may be referred unto two heads:—

(1.) A diligent *search into ourselves*, and a holy watch over ourselves, with respect unto those ways and sins which the displeasure of God is declared against. That present providences are indications of God's anger and displeasure, we take for granted. But when this is done, the most are apt to cast the causes of them on others, and to excuse themselves. So long as they see others more wicked and profligate than themselves, openly guilty of such crimes as they abhor the thoughts of, they cast all the wrath on them, and fear nothing but that they shall suffer with them. But, alas! when the storm came on the ship at sea, wherein there was but one person that feared God, upon an inquiry for whose sake it came, the lot fell on him, Jonah i. 7. The cause of the present storm may as well be the secret sins of professors as the open provocations of ungodly men. God will punish severely those which he hath known, Amos iii. 2. It is therefore certainly our duty to search diligently, that nothing be found resting in us against which God is declaring his displeasure. Take heed of negligence and security herein. When our Saviour foretold his disciples that "one of them should betray him," he who alone was guilty was the last that said, "Master, is it I?" Let no ground of hopes you have of your spiritual

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condition and acceptance with God, no sense of your sincerity in any of your duties, no visible difference between you and others in the world, impose themselves on your minds to divert them from diligence in this duty. "The LORD'S voice crieth unto the city, and the man of wisdom will see his name."

(2.) A diligent endeavour to *live in a holy resignation of our persons, our lives, our families, all our enjoyments, unto the sovereign will and wisdom of God,* so as that we may be in readiness to part with all things upon his call without repining. This, also, is plainly declared in the voice of present providences. God is making wings for men's riches, he is shaking their habitations, taking away the visible defences of their lives, proclaiming the instability and uncertainty of all things here below; and if we are not minded to contend with him, we have nothing left to give us rest and peace for a moment but a holy resignation of all unto his sovereign pleasure.

Would you now know what you should fix and exercise your thoughts upon, so as that they may be evidences of your being spiritually minded? I say, be frequently conversant in them about these things. They lie before you, they call upon you, and will find you a just employment. Count them part of your business, allow them some part of your time, cease not until you have the testimony of your consciences that you have in sincerity stated both these duties in your minds; which will never be done without many thoughts about them. Unless it be so with you, God will be greatly displeased at the neglect of his coming and call, now it is so plain and articulate. Fear the woful dooms recorded, Prov. i. 24–31, Isa. lxv. 12, lxvi. 4, to this purpose. And if any calamity, public or private, do overtake you under a neglect of these duties, you will be wofully surprised, and not know which way to turn for relief. This, therefore, is the time and season wherein you may have an especial trial and experiment whether you be spiritually minded or no. It is the wisdom of faith to excite and draw forth grace into exercise, according unto present occasions. If this grace be habitually resident in you, it will put itself forth in many thoughts about these present duties.

But, alas! for the most part, men are apt to walk contrary to God in these things, as the wisdom of the flesh is contrary unto him in all things. A great instance we have with respect unto these duties, especially the latter of them; for,—

[1.] Who almost makes a diligent search into and trial of his heart and ways with respect unto the procuring causes of the displeasure and judgments of God? Generally, when the tokens and evidences of them do most abound, the world is full of outrageous, provoking sins. These visibly proclaim themselves to be the causes of the "coming of the wrath of God on the children of disobedience."

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Hence most men are apt to cast the whole reason of present judgments upon them, and to put it wholly from themselves. Hence, commonly, there is never less of self-examination than when it is called for in a peculiar manner. But as I will not deny but that the open, daring sins of the world are the procuring cause of the wrath of God against it in temporal judgments, so the wisest course for us is to refer them unto the great judgment of the last day. This the apostle directs us unto, 2 Thess. i. 6–10. Our duty it is to consider on what account "judgment begins at the house of God," and to examine ourselves with respect thereunto.

[2.] Again, the other part of our present duty, in compliance with the voice of providence, is *an humble resignation of ourselves and all our concernments unto the will of God*, sitting loose in our affections from all earthly, temporal enjoyments. This we neither do nor can do, let us profess what we will, unless our thoughts are greatly exercised about the reasons for it and motives unto it; for this is the way whereby faith puts forth its efficacy unto the mortification of self and all earthly enjoyments. Wherefore, without this we can make no resignation of ourselves unto the will of God. But, alas! how many at present do openly walk contrary unto God herein! The ways, the countenances, the discourses of men, do give evidence hereunto. Their love unto present things, their contrivances for their increase and continuance, do grow and thrive under the calls of God to the contrary. So it was of old: "They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark." Can the generality of professors at this day give testimony unto the exercise of their thoughts upon such things as should dispose them unto this holy resignation? that they meditate on the calls of God, and thence make themselves ready to part with all at his time and pleasure? How can persons pretend to be spiritually minded, the current of whose thoughts lies in direct contrariety unto the mind of God?

Here lies the ground of their self-deceivings: They are professors of the gospel in a peculiar manner, they judge themselves believers, they hope they shall be saved, and have many evidences for it. But one negative evidence will render a hundred that are positive useless. "All these things have I done," saith the young man. "Yet lackest thou one thing," saith the Saviour. And the want of that one rendered his "all things" of no avail unto him. Many things you have done, many things you do, many grounds of hope abide with you, neither yourselves nor others do doubt of your condition; but are you spiritually minded? If this one thing be wanting, all the rest will not avail you; you have, indeed, neither life nor peace. And what grounds have you to judge that you are so, if the current

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of your thoughts lies in direct contrariety unto the present calls of God? If, at such a time as this is, your love to the world be such as ever it was, and perhaps increased; if your desires are strong to secure the things of this life unto you and yours; if the daily contrivance of your minds be not how you may attain a constant resignation of yourselves and your all unto the will of God, which will not be done without much thoughtfulness and meditations on the reasons of it and motives unto it,—I cannot understand how you can judge yourselves to be spiritually minded.

If any, therefore, shall say that they would abound more in spiritual thoughts, only they know not what to fix them upon, I propose this in the first place, as that which will lead them unto the due performance of present duties.

2. The *special trials and temptations of men* call for the exercise of their thoughts in a peculiar manner with respect unto them. If a man hath a bodily disease, pain, or distemper, it will cause him to think much of it whether he will or no, at least, if he be wise he will so do; nor will he always be complaining of the smart, but he will inquire into the causes, and seek their removal. Yet are there some distempers, as lethargies, which in their own nature take away all sense and thoughts of themselves; and some are of such a slow, secret progress, as hectic fevers, that they are not taken notice of;—but both these are mortal. And shall men be more negligent about the spiritual distempers of their souls, so as to have multiplied temptations, the cause of all spiritual diseases, and take no thought about them? Is it not to be feared that where it is so, they are such as either in their own nature have deprived them of spiritual sense, or by their deceitfulness are leading on insensibly unto death eternal? Not to have our minds exercised about these things is to be stupidly secure, Prov. xxiii. 34, 35.

There is, I confess, some difficulty in this matter, how to exercise our thoughts aright about our temptations; for the great way of the prevalency of temptations is by stirring up multiplied thoughts about their objects, or what they do lead unto. And this is done or occasioned several ways:—(1.) From the previous power of *lust in the affections*. This will fill the mind with thoughts. The heart will coin imaginations in compliance therewith. They are the way and means whereby lust draws away the heart from duty and enticeth unto sin, James i. 14; the means at least whereby men come to have "eyes full of adultery," 2 Pet. ii. 14, or to live in constant contemplation of the pleasures of sin. (2.) They arise and are occasioned by renewed representations of the object of sin. And this is twofold:—[1.] That which is *real*, as Achan saw the wedge of gold and coveted it, Josh. vii. 21; Prov. xxiii. 31. Against this is that

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prayer of the psalmist, "Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity;" and the covenant of Job, chap. xxxi. 1. [2.] *Imaginary*, when the imagination, being tainted or infected by lust, continually represents the pleasure of sin and the actings of it unto the mind. Herein do men "make provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof," Rom. xiii. 14. (3.) From the suggestions of Satan, who useth all his wiles and artifices to stir up thoughts about that sin whereunto the temptation leads. And temptation seldom fails of its end, when it can stir up a multitude of unprofitable thoughts about its object; for when temptations do multiply thoughts about sin, proceeding from some or all of these causes, and the mind hath wonted itself to give them entertainment, those in whom they are do want nothing but opportunities and occasions, taking off the power of outward restraints, for the commission of actual sin. When men have so devised mischief, "they practise it" when it is "in the power of their hand," Micah ii. 1. It is no way safe to advise such persons to have many thoughts about their temptations; they will all turn to their disadvantage.

I speak unto them only unto whom *their temptations are their affliction and their burden.* And such persons also must be very careful how they suffer their thoughts to be exercised about the matter of their temptation, lest it be a snare and be too hard for them. Men may begin their thoughts of any object with abhorrency and detestation, and, if it be a case of temptation, end them in complacency and approbation. The deceitfulness of sin lays hold on something or other that lust in the mind stays upon with delectation, and so corrupts the whole frame of spirit which began the duty. There have been instances wherein persons have entered with a resolution to punish sin, and have been ensnared by the occasion unto the commission of the sin they thought to punish. Wherefore, it is seldom that the mind of any one exercised with an actual temptation is able safely to conflict with it, if it entertain abiding thoughts of the matter of it or of the sin whereunto it leads; for sin hath "mille nocendi artes," and is able to transfuse its poison into the affections from every thing it hath once made a bait of, especially if it have already defiled the mind with pleasing contemplations of it. Yea, oftentimes a man, that hath some spiritual strength, and therein engageth unto the performance of duties, if in the midst of them the matter of his temptation is so presented unto him as to take hold of his thoughts, in a moment, as if he had seen (as they say) Medusa's head, is turned into a stone; his spirits are all frozen, his strength is gone, all actings of grace do cease, his armour falls from him, and he gives up himself a prey to his temptation. It must be a new supply of grace that can give him any deliverance.

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Wherefore, whilst persons are exercised with any temptation, I do not advise them to be conversant in their thoughts about the matter of it; for sometimes remembrances of former satisfaction of their lusts, sometimes present surprisals, with the suitableness of it unto corruption not yet mortified, sometimes the craft of Satan fixing their imagination on it, will be too hard for them, and carry them unto a fresh compliance with that sin which they would be delivered from.

But this season calls in an especial manner for the exercise of the thoughts of men about the ways and means of *deliverance from the snare wherein they are taken*, or the danger they find themselves exposed unto. Think of the *guilt of sin*, that you may be humbled. Think of the *power of sin*, that you may seek strength against it. Think not of the *matter of sin*, the things that are in the world suited unto "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life," lest you be more and more entangled. But the present direction is, Think much of the ways of relief from the power of your own temptation leading unto sin. But this, men, unless they are spiritually minded, are very loath to come unto. I speak not of them that love their shackles, that glory in their yoke, that like their temptations well enough, as those which give the most satisfactory entertainment unto their minds. Such men know not well what to do unless they may in their minds converse with the objects of their lusts, and do multiply thoughts about them continually. The apostle calls it "making provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof." Their principal trouble is, that they cannot comply with them to the utmost, by reason of some outward restraints. These dwell near unto those fools who make a mock of sin, and will ere long take up their habitation among them.

But I speak, as I said before, of them only whose temptations are their afflictions, and who groan for deliverance from them. Acquaint such persons with the great, indeed only, way of relief in this distress, as it is expressed, Heb. ii. 17, 18, "He is a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining unto God; for in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted;" and chap. iv. 15, 16, "We have not an high priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin; let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need;"—let them know that the only way for their deliverance is by acting faith in thoughts on Christ, his power to succour them that are tempted, with the ways whereby he administereth a sufficiency of grace unto that end, retreating for relief unto him on the urgency of temptations;—they can hardly be

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brought unto a compliance therewithal. They are ready to say, "'Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel?' Is it not better to betake ourselves and to trust unto our own promises, resolutions, and endeavours, with such other ways of escape as are in our own power?" I shall speak nothing against any of them in their proper place, so far as they are warranted by Scripture rule. But this I say, none shall ever be delivered from perplexing temptations, unto the glory of God and their own spiritual advantage, but by the acting and exercising of faith on Christ Jesus and the sufficiency of his grace for our deliverance. But when men are not spiritually minded, they cannot fix their thoughts on spiritual things. Therefore do men daily pine away under their temptations; they get ground upon them, until their breach grows great like the sea, and there be no healing of it.

I mention this only to show the weight and necessity of the duty proposed; for when men under the power of conviction are pressed with temptation, they will do any thing rather than betake themselves unto the only efficacious relief. Some will groan and cry out under their vexation from the torture they are put into in the conflict between their temptations and convictions; some will betake themselves unto the pretended relief that any false religion tenders unto them; but to apply themselves in thoughts of faith unto Jesus Christ, whose grace alone is sufficient for all, that they will not be persuaded unto.

We are all of us liable unto temptations. Those who are not sensible of it are under the power of what the temptation leads unto. And they are of two sorts:—First, such as are *extraordinary*, when the hand of God is in them in a peculiar manner for our rebuke. It is true, *God tempts none*, as temptation formally leads unto sin; but he *orders temptations* so far forth as they are afflictive and chastisements. Thus it is when he suffers an especial corruption within to fall in conjunction with an especial temptation without, and to obtain a prevalency thereby. Of these there is no doubt but any man not judicially hardened may know both his disease and the remedy. But that *ordinary course* of temptations which we are exercised withal needs a diligent attendance for their discovery, as well as for our deliverance from them. And it is to be feared that many are kept in spiritual weakness, useless, and in darkness, all their days, through the power of their temptations, yet never know what they are or wherein they consist. These gray hairs are sprinkled on them, yet they know it not. Some approve themselves in those very things and ways which are their temptations. Yet in the exercise of due watchfulness, diligence, and prudence, men may know both the plague of their own hearts in their prevailing corruptions,

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and the ways whereby it is excited through temptation, with the occasions it makes use of and the advantages it takes. For instance, one may have an eminency in gifts, and usefulness or success in his labours, which give him great acceptance with others. Such an one shall hardly avoid a double temptation,—first, of spiritual pride and self-exaltation. Hence the apostle will not admit "a novice," one unexperienced in the ways of grace and deceits of sin, into the office of the ministry, lest he should be "lifted up with pride," and "fall into the condemnation of the devil," 1 Tim. iii. 6; he himself was not without danger hereof, 2 Cor. xii. 1–7. The best of men can hardly fortify their minds against the secret workings of pride upon successes and applause, unless they keep themselves constantly balanced with thoughts of their own vileness in the sight of God. And, secondly, remissness unto exact, universal mortification, which they countenance themselves against by their acceptance and success above others in the ministry. It were much to be desired that all who are ministers would be careful in these things; for although some of us may not much please others, yet we may so far please ourselves as to expose our souls unto these snares. And the effects of negligence herein do openly appear unto the disadvantage of the gospel. Others are much conversant in the world and the affairs of it. Negligence as unto a spiritual watch, vanity in converse, love of earthly things, with conformity unto the world, will on all occasions impose themselves upon them. If they understand not their temptations herein, spiritual mindedness will be impaired in them continually. Those that are rich have their especial temptations, which for the most part are many, plausible, and effectual; and those that are poor have theirs also. The snares of some lie in their *constitutions;* of others, in their *society;* of most, in the *various circumstances* of life. Those who are upon their watch in any due measure, who exercise any wisdom or observation concerning themselves, may know wherein their temptations do lie, what are the advantages whereby they perplex their minds and endanger their souls.

In these cases, generally, men are taught what are the ways and means of their deliverance and preservation. Wherefore there are three things required unto this duty, and spiritual wisdom unto them all:—(1.) To know what are the *especial temptations* from whence you suffer, and whereby the life of God is obstructed in you. If this be neglected, if it be disregarded, no man can maintain either life or peace, or is spiritually minded. (2.) To know your *remedy*, your relief, wherein alone it doth consist. Many duties are required of us unto this end, and are useful thereunto; but know assuredly that no one of them, not all of them in conjunction, will bring in relief, unto the glory of God and your own peace, without application

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by faith unto Him who "is able to succour them that are tempted." Wherefore, (3.) Herein lies your great duty with respect unto your temptations, namely, in a constant exercise of your thoughts on the love, care, compassion, and tenderness of Christ, with his ability to help, succour, and save them that do believe, so as to strengthen your faith and trust in him; which will assuredly prove successful and victorious.

The same duty is incumbent on us with respect unto any *urgent prevalent general temptation.* There are seasons wherein an hour of temptation comes on the earth to try them that dwell therein. What if a man should judge that now it is such an hour, and that the power of darkness is put forth therein? What if he should be persuaded that a general security, coldness, deadness, and decay in grace, especially as to the vigorous actings of zeal, love, and delight in God, with an indifferency unto holy duties, are the effects of this hour of temptation? I do not say determinately that so it is; let others judge as they see cause: but if any one do so judge, undoubtedly it is his duty to be exercised in his thoughts how he may escape in this day of trial, and be counted worthy to stand before the Son of man. He will find it his concernment to be conversant in his mind with the reasons and motives unto watchfulness, and how he may obtain such supplies of grace as may effectually preserve him from such decays.

3. *All things in religion, both in faith and practice, are to be the objects of such thoughts.* As they are proposed or occur in our minds in great variety, on all sorts of occasions, so we ought to give them entertainment in our meditations. To hear things, to have them proposed unto us, it may be in the way of a divine ordinance, and to let them slip out, or flow from us as water that is poured into a leaking vessel, is the ruin of many souls. I shall therefore choose out some instances, as was before proposed, of those things which I judge that they who would be spiritually minded ought to abide and abound in thoughts concerning.

It is our duty greatly *to mind the things that are above, eternal things, both as unto their reality, their present state, and our future enjoyment of them.* Herein consists the life of this grace and duty. To be *heavenly minded,*—that is, to mind the things of heaven,—and to be *spiritually minded,* is all one; or it is the effect of being spiritually minded as unto its original and essence, or the first proper actings of it. It is the cause of it as unto its growth and degrees, and it is the evidence of it in experience. Nor do I understand how it is possible for a man to place his chief interest in things above, and not have many thoughts of them. It is the great advice of the apostle, on a supposition of our interest in Christ and confor-

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mity unto him, Col. iii. 1, 2, "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on" (or your thoughts), mind much, "things above." It becomes those who, through the virtue of the resurrection of Christ, are raised unto newness of life to have their thoughts exercised on the state of things above, with respect unto the presence of Christ among them. And the singular use of our prospect into these things, or our meditations on them, he instructs us in: 2 Cor. iv. 16–18, "For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal." Not to faint under the daily decays of our outward man, and the approaches of death thereby, to bear afflictions as things light and momentary, to thrive under all in the inward man, are unspeakable mercies and privileges. Can you attain a better frame? Is there any thing that you would more desire, if you are believers? Is it not better to have such a mind in us than to enjoy all the peace and security that the world can afford? One principal means whereby we are made partakers of these things is a due meditation on things unseen and eternal. These are the things that are within the veil, whereon we ought to cast the anchor of our hope in all the storms we meet withal, Heb. vi. 19, 20, whereof we shall speak more afterward.

Without doubt, the generality of Christians are greatly defective in this duty, partly for want of light into them, partly for want of delight in them; they think little of an eternal country. Wherever men are, they do not use to neglect thoughts of that country wherein their inheritance lies. If they are absent from it for a season, yet will they labour to acquaint themselves with the principal concernments of it. But this heavenly country, wherein lies our eternal inheritance, is not regarded. Men do not exercise themselves as they ought unto thoughts of things eternal and invisible. It were impossible, if they did so, that their minds should be so earthly, and their affections cleave so as they do unto present things. He that looks steadily on the sun, although he cannot bear the lustre of its beams fully, yet his sight is so affected with it that when he calls off his eyes from it, he can see nothing as it were of the things about him; they are all dark unto him. And he who looks steadily in his contemplations on things above, eternal things, though he cannot comprehend their glory, yet a veil will be cast by it on all the desirable beauties of earthly things, and take off his affections from them.

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Men live and act under the power of a conviction that there is a state of immortality and glory to come. With a persuasion hereof they much relieve themselves in their sorrows, sufferings, and temptations; yet with many it is only a reserve when they can be here no more. But as unto daily contemplation of the nature and causes of it, or as unto any entrance into it by faith and hope, the most are strangers thereunto. If we are spiritually minded, nothing will be more natural unto us than to have many thoughts of eternal things, as those wherein all our own principal concerns do lie, as well as those which are excellent and glorious in themselves. The direction thereon is, that we would make heavenly things, the things of the future state of blessedness and glory, a principal object of our thoughts, that we would think much about them, that we would meditate much upon them. Many are discouraged herein by their ignorance and darkness, by their want of due conceptions and steady apprehensions of invisible things. Hence one of these two things doth befall them when they would meditate on things above:—1. *The glory of them, the glory of God in them*, being essentially infinite and incomprehensible, doth immediately overwhelm them, and, as it were, in a moment put them unto an utter loss, so that they cannot frame one thought in their minds about them. Or, 2. They want *skill and ability to conceive aright of invisible things*, and to dispose of them in such order in their minds as that they may sedately exercise their thoughts about them. Both these shall be afterward spoken unto. At present I shall only say, that,—

Whosoever shall sincerely engage in this duty according unto what he hath, and shall abide constant therein, he will make such a refreshing progress in his apprehension of heavenly things as he will be greatly satisfied withal. We are kept in darkness, ignorance, and unsteadiness of meditations about them, not from the nature of the things themselves, but from our own sloth, negligence, and readiness to be turned aside by apprehensions of difficulties, of the lion in the way. Wherefore, I shall consider two things: (1.) What are the *principal motives* unto this duty of fixing our thoughts on the things that are above, and the advantages which we receive thereby. (2.) Give *some directions* how, and on what in particular, we may exercise our thoughts on those things above:—

(1.) [1.] *Faith will be increased and strengthened by it.* Invisible things are the proper objects of faith. It is "the evidence of things not seen," Heb. xi. 1. Wherefore, in our thoughts of them faith is in its proper exercise; which is the principal means of its growth and increase. And hereon two things will ensue:—

1*st. The soul will come unto a more satisfactory, abiding sense of the reality of them.* Things of imagination, which maintain a value

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of themselves by darkness, will not bear a diligent search into them. They lose of their reputation on every serious inquiry. If rational men would but give themselves the liberty of free indagation by their own thoughts, it would quickly cashier the fool's paradise of Mohammed, the purgatory of the Papists, and all such creatures of imagination and superstition. But where things are real and substantial, the more they are inquired into, the more they evidence their being and subsistence. It is not, therefore, every profession of a faith of a future state of blessedness that will realize it in our minds; and therefore, for the most part, it is rather a notion that men have of heavenly things, which they do not contradict, than any solid satisfaction in or spiritual sense of their reality: for these are things that "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor will enter into the heart of man to conceive,"—whose existence, nature, and real state, are not easily comprehended. But through the continual exercise of holy thoughts about them, the soul obtains an entrance into the midst of them, finding in them both durable substance and riches. There is no way, therefore, to strengthen faith unto any degree but by a daily contemplation on the things themselves. They who do not think of them *frequently* shall never believe them *sincerely*. They admit not of any collateral evidence, where they do not evidence themselves unto our souls. Faith, as we said, thus exercised, will give them a subsistence; not in themselves, which they have antecedent thereunto, but in us, in our hearts, in the minds of them that do believe. *Imagination* creates its own object; *faith* finds it prepared beforehand. It will not leave a bare notion of them in the understanding, but give them a spiritual subsistence in the heart, as Christ himself dwells in our hearts by faith. And there are two things that will discover this subsistence of them in us:—(1*st.*) When we find them in a continual readiness *to rise up in our minds* on all occasions wherein the thoughts and remembrance of them are needful and useful unto us. There are many seasons (some whereof shall be immediately spoken unto) and many duties, wherein and whereunto the faith and thoughts of things invisible and eternal are needful unto us, so as that we cannot fill up those seasons nor perform those duties in a due manner without them. If on all such occasions they do, from the inward frame of our minds, present themselves unto us, or, through our acquaintance and familiarity with them, we recur in our thoughts unto them, they seem to have a real subsistence given unto them in our souls. But if on such occasions, wherein alone they will yield us help and relief, we accustom ourselves to other thoughts, if those concerning them are, as it were, out of the way, and arise not in our minds of their own accord, we are yet strangers unto this effect of faith. (2*dly.*) They are realized unto us, they have a subsistence

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in us, when the soul continually *longeth to be in them.* When they have given such a relish unto our hearts, as the first-fruits of glory, that we cannot but desire on all opportune occasions to be in the full enjoyment of them, faith seems to have had its effectual work herein upon us. For want of these things do many among us walk in disconsolation all their days.

2dly. It will *gradually give the heart an acquaintance with the especial nature and use of these things. General thoughts* and *notions* of heaven and glory do but fluctuate up and down in the mind, and very little influence it unto other duties; but *assiduous contemplation* will give the mind such distinct apprehensions of heavenly things as shall duly affect it with the glory of them.

The more we discern of the glory and excellency of them in their own nature; of their suitableness unto ours, as our only proper rest and blessedness, as the perfection and complement of what is already begun in us by grace; of the restless tendency of all gracious dispositions and inclinations of our hearts towards their enjoyment,—the more will faith be established in its cleaving unto them. So in the contemplation of these things consists *the principal food of faith,* whereby it is nourished and strengthened. And we are not to expect much work where there is not provision of proper food for them that labour. No wonder if we find faith faint and weak in the work it hath to do, which ofttimes is great and weighty, if we neglect to guide it daily unto that which should administer strength unto it.

[2.] It will give *life and exercise unto the grace of hope.* Hope is a glorious grace, whereunto blessed effects are ascribed in the Scripture, and an effectual operation unto the supportment and consolation of believers. By it are we purified, sanctified, saved. And, to sum up the whole of its excellency and efficacy, it is a principal way of the working of Christ as inhabiting in us: Col. i. 27, "Christ in you the hope of glory." Where Christ evidenceth his presence with us, he gives us an infallible hope of glory; he gives us an assured pledge of it, and worketh our souls into an expectation of it. Hope in general is but an uncertain expectation of a future good which we desire; but as it is a gospel grace, all uncertainty is removed from it, which would hinder us of the advantage intended in it. It is an earnest expectation, proceeding from faith, trust, and confidence, accompanied with longing desires of enjoyment. From a mistake of its nature it is that few Christians labour after it, exercise themselves unto it, or have the benefit of it; for, to live by hope they suppose infers a state not only beneath the life of faith and all assurance in believing, but also exclusive of them. They think to hope to be saved is a condition of men who have no grounds of faith

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or assurance; but this is to turn a blessed fruit of the Spirit into a common affection of nature. Gospel hope is a fruit of faith, trust, and confidence; yea, the height of the actings of all grace issues in a well-grounded hope, nor can it rise any higher, Rom. v. 2–5.

Now, the reason why men have no more use of, no more benefit by, this excellent grace, is because they do not abide in thoughts and contemplation of the things hoped for. The especial object of hope is eternal glory, Col. i. 27; Rom. v. 2. The peculiar use of it is to support, comfort, and refresh the soul, in all trials, under all weariness and despondencies, with a firm expectation of a speedy entrance into that glory, with an earnest desire after it. Wherefore, unless we acquaint ourselves, by continual meditation, with the reality and nature of this glory, it is impossible it should be the object of a vigorous, active hope, such as whereby the apostle says "we are saved." Without this we can neither have that evidence of eternal things, nor that valuation of them, nor that preparedness in our minds for them, as should keep us in the exercise of gracious hope about them.

Suppose sundry persons engaged in a voyage unto a most remote country, wherein all of them have an apprehension that there is a place of rest and an inheritance provided for them. Under this apprehension they all put themselves upon their voyage, to possess what is so prepared. Howbeit some of them have only a general notion of these things; they know nothing distinctly concerning them, and are so busied about other affairs that they have no leisure to inquire into them, or do suppose that they cannot come unto any satisfactory knowledge of them in particular, and so are content to go on with general hopes and expectations. Others there are who by all possible means acquaint themselves particularly with the nature of the climate whither they are going, with the excellency of the inheritance and provision that is made for them. Their voyage proves long and wearisome, their difficulties many, and their dangers great, and they have nothing to relieve and encourage themselves with but the hope and expectation of the country whither they are going. Those of the first sort will be very apt to despond and faint, their general hopes will not be able to relieve them; but those who have a distinct notion and apprehension of the state of things whither they are going, and of their incomparable excellency, have always in a readiness wherewith to cheer their minds and support themselves.

In that journey or pilgrimage wherein we are engaged towards a heavenly country, we are sure to meet with all kinds of dangers, difficulties, and perils. It is not a general notion of blessedness that will excite and work in us a spiritual, refreshing hope. But when we think and meditate on future glory as we ought, that grace

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which is neglected for the most part as unto its benefit, and dead as unto its exercise, will of all others be most vigorous and active, putting itself forth on all occasions. This, therefore, is an inestimable benefit of the duty exhorted unto, and which they find the advantage of who are really spiritually minded.

[3.] This alone will make us *ready for the cross*, for all sorts of sufferings that we may be exposed unto.

There is nothing more necessary unto believers at this season than to have their minds furnished with provision of such things as may prepare them for the cross and sufferings. Various intimations of the mind of God, circumstances of providence, the present state of things in the world, with the instant peril of the latter days, do all call them hereunto. If it be otherwise with them, they will at one time or other be wofully surprised, and think strange of their trials, as if some strange thing did befall them. Nothing is more useful unto this end than constant thoughts and contemplations of eternal things and future glory. From hence alone can the soul have in a readiness what to lay in the balance against all sorts of sufferings. When a storm begins to arise at sea, the mariners bestir themselves in the management of the tackling of the ship, and other applications of their art, for their safety; but if the storm increase and come to extremity, they are forced to forego all other means and betake themselves unto a sheet-anchor, to hold their ship steady against its violence. So when a storm of persecution and troubles begins to arise, men have various ways and considerations for their relief; but if it once come to extremity,—if sword, nakedness, famine, and death, are inevitably coming upon them,—they have nothing to betake themselves unto that will yield them solid relief but the consideration and faith of things invisible and eternal.

So the apostle declares this state of things, 2 Cor. iv. 16–18 (the words before insisted on), "For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal." He lays all sorts of afflictions in one scale, and, on the consideration of them, declares them to be "light" and "but for a moment." Then he lays glory in the other scale, and finds it to be ponderous, weighty, and "eternal,"—"an exceeding weight of glory." In the one is sorrow for a little while, in the other eternal joy; in the one pain for a few moments, in the other everlasting rest; in the one is the loss of some few tem-

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porary things, in the other the full fruition of God in Christ, who is all in all.

Hence the same apostle casts up the account of these things, and gives us his judgment concerning them, Rom. viii. 18, "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us." There is no comparison between them, as if one had as much evil and misery in them as the other hath of good and blessedness; as though his state were any way to be complained of who must undergo the one whilst he hath an interest in the other; or as though to escape the one he hazard the enjoyment of the other.

It is inseparable from our nature to have a fear of and aversation from great, distressing sufferings, that are above the power of nature to bear. Even our Lord Jesus himself, having taken on him all the sinless properties of our nature, had a fear and aversation, though holy and gracious, with respect unto his own. Those who, through a stout-heartedness, do contemn them before their approach, boasting in themselves of their abilities to undergo them, censuring such as will not unadvisedly engage in them, are such as seldom glorify God when they are really [called] to conflict with them. Peter alone trusted unto himself that he would not forsake his Master, and seemed to take the warning ill that they should all do so, and he alone denied him. All church stories are filled with instances of such as, having borne themselves high before the approach of trials, have shamefully miscarried when their trials have come. Wherefore, it is moreover allowed unto us to use all lawful means for the avoiding of them. Both rules and examples of the Scripture give sufficient warranty for it. But there are times and seasons wherein, without any tergiversation, they are to be undergone unto the glory of God and in the discharge of our duty, confessing Christ before men, as we would be owned by him before his Father in heaven. All things do now call us to prepare for such a season, to be *martyrs in resolution*, though we should never really lose our lives by violence. Nothing will give us this preparation but to have our minds exercised in the contemplation of heavenly things, of things that are invisible and eternal. He who is thus spiritually minded, who hath his thoughts and affections set on things above, will have always in a readiness what to oppose unto any circumstance of his sufferings.

Those views which such an one hath had by faith of the uncreated glories above, of the things in heavenly places where Christ sits at the right hand of God, of the glory within the veil, whereby they have been realized and made present unto his soul, will now visit him every moment, abide with him continually, and put forth their efficacy unto his supportment and refreshment. Alas! what will

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become of many of us, who are grovelling continually on the earth, whose bellies cleave unto the dust, who are strangers unto the thoughts of heavenly things, when distressing troubles shall befall us? Why shall we think that refreshing thoughts of things above will then visit our souls, when we resisted their admittance in days of peace? "Do ye come to me in your distress," saith Jephthah, "when in the time of your peace ye drove me from you?" When we would thus think of heavenly things to our refreshment, we shall hardly get them to make an abode with us. I know God can come in by the mighty power of his Spirit and grace to support and comfort the souls of them who are called and even surprised into the greatest of sufferings; yet do I know also that it is our duty not to tempt him in the neglect of the ways and means which he hath appointed for the communication of his grace unto us.

Our Lord Jesus Christ himself, as "the author and finisher of our faith, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame," Heb. xii. 2. His mediatory glory in the salvation of the church was the matter of the joy set before him. This he took the view and prospect of in all his sufferings, unto his refreshment and supportment. And his example, as "the author and finisher of our faith," is more efficaciously instructive than any other rule or precept. Eternal glory is set before us also; it is the design of God's wisdom and grace that by the contemplation of it we should relieve ourselves in all our sufferings, yea, and rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory. How many of those blessed souls now in the enjoyment of God and glory, who passed through fiery trials and great tribulations, were enabled to sing and rejoice in the flames by prepossession of this glory in their minds through believing! yea, some of them have been so filled with them as to take off all sense of pain under the most exquisite tortures. When Stephen was to be stoned, to encourage him in his suffering and comfort him in it, "the heavens were opened, and he saw Jesus standing at the right hand of God." Who can conceive what contempt of all the rage and madness of the Jews, what a neglect of all the pains of death, this view raised his holy soul unto? To obtain, therefore, such views frequently by faith, as they do who are truly spiritually minded, is the most effectual way to encourage us unto all our sufferings. The apostle gives us the force of this encouragement in a comparison with earthly things: 1 Cor. ix. 25, "Every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible." If men, when a corruptible crown of vain honour and applause is proposed unto them, will do and endure all that is needful for the attainment of it, and relieve themselves in their hardships with

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thoughts and imaginations of attaining it, grounded on uncertain hopes, shall not we, who have a *crown immortal and invisible* proposed unto us, and that with the highest assurance of the enjoyment of it, cheerfully undergo, endure, and suffer, what we are to go through in the way unto it.

[4.] This is *the most effectual means to wean the heart and affections from things here below*, to keep the mind unto an undervaluation, yea, a contempt of them, as occasion shall require; for there is a season wherein there is such a contempt required in us of all relations and enjoyments as our Saviour calleth the "hating" of them,—that is, not absolutely, but comparatively, in comparison of him and the gospel, with the duties which belong unto our profession: Luke xiv. 26, "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." Some, I fear, if they did but consider it, would be apt to say, "This is a hard saying, who can bear it?" and others would cry out, with the disciples in another case, "Lord, who then can be saved?" but it is the word whereby we must be judged, nor can we be the disciples of Christ on any other terms. But here, in an especial manner, lies the wound and weakness of faith and profession in these our days: "The bellies of men cleave unto the dust," or their affections unto earthly things.

I speak not of those who, by rapine, deceit, and oppression, strive to enrich themselves; nor of those who design nothing more than the attainment of greatness and promotion in the world, though not by ways of open wickedness; least of all of them who make religion, and perhaps their ministry therein, a means for the attaining of secular ends and preferments. No wise man can suppose such persons, any of them, to be spiritually minded, and it is most easy to disprove all their pretences. But I intend only those at present whose ways and means of attaining *riches* are lawful, honest, and unblamable; who use them with some moderation, and do profess that their portion lies in better things, so as it is hard to fasten a conviction on them in the matter of their conversation. Whatever may seem to reflect upon them, they esteem it to be that whose omission would make them foolish in their affairs or negligent in their duty. But even among these also there is ofttimes that inordinate love unto present things, that esteem and valuation of them, that concernment in them, as are not consistent with their being spiritually minded. With some *their relations*, with some *their enjoyments*, with most *both in conjunction*, are an idol which they set up in their hearts and secretly bow down unto. About these are their hopes and fears exercised, on them is their love, in them is their delight. They are wholly taken

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up with their own concerns, count all lost that is not spent on them, and all time misspent that is not engaged about them. Yet the things which they do they judge to be good in themselves; their hearts do not condemn them as to the matter of them. The valuation they have of their relations and enjoyments they suppose to be lawful, within the bounds which they have assigned unto it. Their care about them is, in their own minds, but their duty. It is no easy matter, it requires much spiritual wisdom, to fix right boundaries unto our affections and their actings about earthly things. But let men plead and pretend what they please, I shall offer one rule in this case, which will not fail; and this is, that when men are so confident in the good state and measure of their affections and their actings towards earthly things as that they will oppose their engagements into them unto known duties of religion, piety, and charity, they are gone into a sinful excess. Is there a state of the poor that requires their liberality and bounty?—you must excuse them, they have *families to provide for;* when what is expected from them signifies nothing at all as unto a due provision for their families, nor is what would lessen their inheritances or portions one penny in the issue. Are they called to an attendance on seasons of religious duties?—*they are so full of business* that it is impossible for them to have leisure for any such occasions. So by all ways declaring that they are under the power of a prevalent, predominant affection unto earthly things. This fills all places with lifeless, sapless, useless professors, who approve themselves in their condition, whilst it is visibly unspiritual and withering.

The heart will have something whereon, in a way of *pre-eminence,* it will fix itself and its affections. This, in all its perpetual motions, it seeks for rest and satisfaction in. And every man hath an edge; the edge of his affections is set one way or other, though it be more keen in some than others. And whereas all sorts of things that the heart can fix upon or turn the edge of its affections unto are distributed by the apostle into "things above" and "things beneath," things heavenly and things earthly, if we have not such a view and prospect of heavenly things as to cause our hearts to cleave unto them and delight in them, let us pretend what we will, it is impossible but that we shall be under the power of a predominant affection unto the things of this world.

Herein lies the great danger of multitudes at this present season; for, let men profess what they will, under the power of this frame their eternal state is in hazard every moment. And persons are engaged in it in great variety of degrees; and we may cast them under two heads:—

1*st.* Some *do not at all understand that things are amiss with*

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them, or that they are much to be blamed. They plead, as was before observed, that they are all lawful things which their hearts do cleave unto, and which it is their duty to take care of and regard. "May they not delight in *their own relations*, especially at such a time, when others break and cancel all duties and bonds of relation in the service of and provision they make for their lusts? May they not be careful, in *good and honest ways* of diligence, about the things of the world, when the most either lavish their time away in the pursuit of bestial lusts, or heap them up by deceit and oppression? May they not *contrive for the promotion of their children* in the world, to add the other hundred or thousand pounds unto their advancement, that they may be in as good condition as others, seeing he is worse than an infidel who provides not for his own family?" By such reasonings and secret thoughts do many justify themselves in their earthly mindedness. And so fixed they are in the approbation of themselves, that if you urge them to their duty, you shall lose their acquaintance, if they do not become your enemies for telling them the truth. Yea, they will avoid one duty that lieth not against their earthly interest, because it leads unto another;—they will not engage in religious assemblies, or be constant unto their duty in them, for fear duties of charity should be required of them or expected from them. On what grounds such persons can satisfy themselves that they are spiritually minded, I know not. I shall leave only one rule with persons that are thus minded:—*Where our love unto the world hath prevailed, by its reasonings, pleas, and pretences, to take away our fear and jealousy over our own hearts lest we should inordinately love it, there it is assuredly predominant in us.*

2*dly*. Others are sensible of the *evil of their hearts*, at least are jealous and afraid lest it should be found that their hearts do cleave inordinately unto these things. Hence they endeavour to contend against this evil, sometimes by forcing themselves unto such acts of piety or charity as are contrary unto that frame, and sometimes by labouring a change of the frame itself; especially they will do so when God is pleased to awaken them by trials and afflictions, such as write vanity and emptiness on all earthly enjoyments. But, for the most part, they strive not lawfully, and so obtain not what they seem to aim at.

This disease with many is mortal, and will not be thoroughly cured in any but by the due exercise of this part of spiritual mindedness. There are other duties required also unto the same end,—namely, of the mortification of our desires and affections unto earthly things,—whereof I have treated elsewhere; but without this, or a fixed contemplation on the desirableness, beauty, and glory, of heavenly things, it will not be attained. Farther to evince the truth hereof, we may

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observe these two things:—(1*st.*) If by any means a man do seem to have taken off his heart from *the love of present things*, and be not at the same time taken up with *the love of things that are heavenly*, his seeming mortification is of no advantage unto him. So persons frequently, through discontent, disappointments, or dissatisfaction with relations, or mere natural weariness, have left the world, the affairs and cares of it, as unto their wonted conversations in it, and have betaken themselves to monasteries, convents, or other retirements suiting their principles, without any advantage to their souls. (2*dly.*) God is no such severe lord and master as to require us to take off our affections from and mortify them unto those things which the law of our nature makes dear unto us, as wives, children, houses, lands, and possessions, and not propose unto us somewhat that is incomparably *more excellent* to fix them upon. So he invites the elect of the Gentiles unto Christ: Ps. xlv. 10, "Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and thy father's house;" that is, "Come into the faith of Abraham, who forsook his country and his father's house to follow God whithersoever he pleased." But he proposeth this for their encouragement, verse 11, "So shall the King greatly desire thy beauty: for he is thy Lord; and worship thou him." The love of the great King is an abundant satisfactory recompense for parting with all things in this world. So when Abraham's servant was sent to take Rebekah for a wife unto Isaac, he required that she should immediately leave father and mother, brothers, and all enjoyments, and go along with him; but withal, that she might know herself to be no loser thereby, he not only assured her of the greatness of his master, but also at present he gave her "jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment," Gen. xxiv. 53. And when our Saviour requires that we should part with all for his sake and the gospel, he promiseth a hundredfold in lieu of them, even in this life,—namely, in an interest in things spiritual and heavenly. Wherefore, without an assiduous meditation on heavenly things, as a better, more noble, and suitable object for our affections to be fixed on, we can never be freed in a due manner from an inordinate love of the things here below.

It is sad to see some professors, who will keep up spiritual duties in churches and in their families, who will speak and discourse of spiritual things, and keep themselves from the open excesses of the world, yet, when they come to be tried by such duties as intrench on their love and adherence unto earthly things, quickly manifest how remote they are from being spiritually minded in a due manner. Were they to be tried as our Saviour tried the young man who made such a profession of his conscientious and religious conversation, "Go sell what thou hast, give to the poor, and follow me," something

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might be pleaded in excuse for their tergiversation; but, alas! they will decline their duty when they are not touched unto the hundredth part of their enjoyments.

I bless God I speak not thus of many of my own knowledge, and may say with the apostle unto the most unto whom I usually speak in this manner, "But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak," Heb. vi. 9. Yea, the same testimony may be given of many in this city which the same apostle gives unto the churches of Macedonia: 2 Cor. viii. 1–3, Understand "the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia; how that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality. For to their power, and beyond their power, they were willing of themselves." There hath been nothing done amongst us that may or can be boasted of; yet, considering all circumstances, it may be there have not been more instances of true, evangelical charity in any age or place for these many years. For them who have been but useful and helpful herein, the Lord remember them for good, and spare them according to the multitude of his mercies! It is true, they have not, many of them, founded colleges, built hospitals, or raised works of state and magnificence; for very many of them are such as whose deep poverty comparatively hath abounded unto the riches of their liberality. The backs and bellies of multitudes of poor and needy servants of Christ have been warmed and refreshed by them, blessing God for them. "Thanks be unto God," saith the apostle in this case, "for his unspeakable gift," 2 Cor. ix. 15. Blessed be God, who hath not left the gospel without this glory, nor the profession of it without this evidence of its power and efficacy! Yea, God hath exalted the glory of persecutions and afflictions; for many, since they have lost much of their enjoyments by them, and have all endangered continually, have abounded in duties of charity beyond what they did in the days of their fulness and prosperity. So "out of the eater there hath come forth meat." And if the world did but know what fruits, in a way of charity and bounty, unto the praise of God and glory of the gospel, have been occasioned by their making many poor, it would abate of their satisfaction in their successes.

But with many it is not so. Their minds are so full of earthly things, they do so cleave unto them in their affections, that no sense of duty, no example of others, no concernment of the glory of God or the gospel, can make any impressions on them. If there be yet in them so much life and light of grace as to design a deliverance from this woful condition, the means insisted on must be made use of.

Especially this advice is needful unto those who are rich, who have large possessions, or abound in the goods of this world. The poor,

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the afflicted, the sorrowful, are prompted from their outward circumstances, as well as excited by inward grace, frequently to remember and to think of the things above, wherein lies their only reserve and relief against the trouble and urgency of their present condition; but the enjoyment of these things in abundance is accompanied with a twofold evil, lying directly contrary unto this duty:—

A desire of increase and adding thereunto. Earthly enjoyments enlarge men's earthly desires, and the love of them grows with their income. A moderate stock of waters, sufficient for our use, may be kept within ordinary banks; but if a flood be turned into them, they know no bounds, but overflow all about them. The increase of wealth and riches enlargeth the desires of men after them beyond all bounds of wisdom, sobriety, or safety. He that labours hard for his daily bread hath seldom such earnest, vehement desires of an addition unto what he hath, as many have who already have more than they know how to use or almost what to do withal. This they must have more, and the last advantage serves for nothing but to stir them up to look out for another. And yet such men would, on other accounts, be esteemed good Christians, and spiritually minded, as all good Christians are.

They draw the heart to value and esteem them, as those which bring in their satisfaction, and make them to differ from those whom they see to be poor and miserable. Now, these things are contrary unto, and, where they are habitually prevalent, inconsistent utterly with, being spiritually minded. Nor is it possible that any who in the least degree are under their power can ever attain deliverance, unless their thoughts are fixed upon, and their minds thereby possessed with, due apprehensions of invisible things and eternal glory.

These are some few of those many advantages which we may obtain by fixing our thoughts and meditations, and thereby our affections, on the things that are above. And there are some things which make me willing to give some few directions for the practice of this duty; for whatever else we are and do, we neither are nor can be truly spiritually minded, whereon life and peace depend, unless we do really exercise our thoughts unto meditations of things above. Without it all our religion is but vain. And as I fear men are generally wanting and defective herein in point of practice, so I do also that many, through the darkness of their minds, the weakness of their intellectuals, and ignorance of the nature of all things unseen, do seldom set themselves unto the contemplation of them. I shall therefore give some few directions for the practice of this duty.

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CHAPTER VI.

Directions unto the exercise of our thoughts on things above, things future, invisible, and eternal; on God himself; with the difficulties of it, and oppositions unto it, and the way of their removal—Right notions of future glory stated.

(2.) WE have treated in general before of the proper objects of our spiritual thoughts as unto our present duty. That which we were last engaged in is an especial instance in heavenly things,—things future and invisible,—with the fountain and spring of them all in Christ and God himself. And because men generally are unskilled herein, and great difficulties arise in the way of the discharge of this part of the duty in hand, I shall give some especial directions concerning it:—

[1.] *Possess your minds with right notions and apprehensions of things above, and of the state of future glory.* We are in this duty to "look at the things which are not seen," 2 Cor. iv. 18. It is faith only whereby we have a prospect of them; for "we walk by faith, and not by sight." And faith can give us no interest in them unless we have due apprehensions of them; for it doth but assent and cleave unto the truth of what is proposed unto it. And the greatest part of mankind do both deceive themselves and feed on ashes in this matter. They fancy a future state, which hath no foundation but in their own imaginations. Wherefore the apostle, directing us to seek and mind the "things that are above," adds, for the guidance of our thoughts, the consideration of the principal concernment of them, "where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God," Col. iii. 1, 2. He would lead us unto distinct apprehensions of those heavenly things, especially of the presence of Christ in his exaltation and glory. Wherefore the true notion of these things which we are to possess our minds withal may here be considered:—

1*st.* All that have an apprehension of a future state of happiness do agree in this matter, that it contains in it, or is accompanied with, *a deliverance and freedom from all that is evil.* But in what is so they are not agreed. Many esteem only those things that are grievous, troublesome, wasting and destructive unto nature, to be so; that is, what is penal, in pain, sickness, sorrow, loss, poverty, with all kinds of outward troubles, and death itself, are evil. Wherefore they suppose that the future state of blessedness will free them from all these things, if they can attain unto it. This they will lay in the balance against the troubles of life, and sometimes, it may be, against the pleasures of it, which they must forego; yea, persons profane and profligate will, in words at least, profess that heaven will give them

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rest from all their troubles: but it is no place of rest for such persons.

Unto all others also, unto believers themselves, these things are evil, such as they expect a deliverance from in heaven and glory. And there is no doubt but it is lawful for us and meet that we should contemplate on them, as those which will give us a deliverance from all outward troubles, death itself, and all that leads thereunto. Heaven is promised as "rest" unto them that are "troubled," 2 Thess. i. 7. It is our duty, under all our sufferings, reproaches, persecutions, troubles, and sorrows, to raise up our minds unto the contemplation of that state wherein we shall be freed from them all. It is a blessed notion of heaven, that "God shall therein wipe away all tears from our eyes," Rev. vii. 17, or remove far from us all causes of sorrow. And it would be unto our advantage if we did accustom our minds more unto this kind of relief than we do,—if, upon the incursion of fears, dangers, sorrows, we did more readily retreat unto thoughts of that state wherein we shall be freed from them all. Even this most inferior consideration of it would render the thoughts of it more familiar, and the thing itself more useful unto us. Much better it were than on such occasions to be exercised with heartless complaints, uncertain hopes, and fruitless contrivances.

But there is that which, unto them who are truly spiritually minded, hath more evil in it than all these things together; and that is sin. Heaven is a state of deliverance from sin, from all sin, in all the causes, concomitants, and effects of it. He is no true believer unto whom sin is not the greatest burden, sorrow, and trouble. Other things, as the loss of dear relations, or extraordinary pains, may make deeper impressions on the mind, by its natural affections, at some seasons than ever our sins did at any one time in any one instance,—so a man may have a greater trouble in sense of pain by a fit of the toothache, which will be gone in an hour, than in a hectic fever or consumption, which will assuredly take away his life,—but take in the whole course of our lives, and all the actings of our souls, in spiritual judgment as well as in natural affection, and I do not understand how a man can be a sincere believer unto whom sin is not the greatest burden and sorrow.

Wherefore, in the first place, it belongs unto the true notion of heaven, that it is a state wherein we shall be eternally freed from sin and all the concernments of it; but only [through] the exaltation of the glory of God's grace in Christ by the pardon of it. He that truly hates sin and abhors it, whose principal desire and design of life is to be freed from it so far as it is possible, who walks in self-abasement through a sense of his many disappointments, when he hoped

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it should act in him no more, cannot, as I judge, but frequently betake himself for refreshment unto thoughts of that state wherein he shall be freed from it, and triumph over it unto eternity. This is a notion of heaven that is easily apprehended and fixed on the mind, and which we may dwell upon unto the great advantage and satisfaction of our souls.

Frequent thoughts and meditations on heaven under this notion do argue a man to be spiritually minded; for it is a convincing evidence that sin is a burden unto him, that he longs to be delivered from it and all its consequents, that no thoughts are more welcome unto him than those of that state wherein sin shall be no more. And although men are troubled about their sins, and would desirously be freed from them, so far as they perplex their minds and make their consciences uneasy, yet if they are not much in the prospect of this relief, if they find not refreshment in it, I fear their trouble is not such as it ought to be. Wherefore, when men can so wrangle and wrestle with their convictions of sin, and yet take up the best of their relief in hopes that it will be better with them at some time or other in this world, without longing desires after that state wherein sin shall be no more, they can give no evidence that they are spiritually minded.

It is quite otherwise with sincere believers in the exercise of this duty. The consideration of the grace and love of God, of the blood of Christ, of the purity and holiness of that good Spirit that dwelleth in them, of the light, grace, and mercy, which they have attained through the promises of the gospel, are those which make the remainders of sin most grievous and burdensome unto them. This is that which even breaks their hearts, and makes some of them go mourning all the day long,—namely, that any thing of that which alone God hates should be found in them or be remaining with them. It is, in this condition, an evidence that they are spiritually minded, if, together with watchful endeavours for the universal mortification of sin, and utter excision of it, both root and branch, they constantly add these thoughts of that blessed state wherein they shall be absolutely and eternally freed from all sin, with refreshment, delight, and complacency.

These things belong unto our direction for the fixing of our thoughts and meditations on things above. This the meanest and weakest person who hath the least spark of sincerity and grace is capable of apprehending and able to practise; and it is that which the sense they have of the evil of sin will put them on every day, if they shut not their eyes against the light of the refreshment that is in it. Let them who cannot rise in their minds unto fixed and stable thoughts of any other notion of these invisible things dwell on

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this consideration of them, wherein they will find no small spiritual advantage and refreshment unto their souls.

2dly. As unto *the positive part* of this glorious future state, the thoughts and apprehensions of men are very various; and that we may know as well what to avoid as what to embrace, we shall a little reflect on some of them:—

(*1st.*) Many are able to entertain no *rational conceptions* about a future state of blessedness and glory, no notions wherein either faith or reason is concerned. Imagination they have of something that is great and glorious, but what it is they know not. No wonder if such persons have no delight in, no use of, thoughts of heaven. When their imaginations have fluctuated up and down in all uncertainties for a while, they are swallowed up in nothing. Glorious, and therefore desirable, they take it for granted that it must be. But nothing can be so unto them but what is suitable unto their present dispositions, inclinations, and principles; and hereof there is nothing in the true spiritual glory of heaven or in the eternal enjoyment of God. These things are not suited unto the will of their minds and of the flesh; and therefore they cannot rise up unto any constant desires of them. Hence, to please themselves, they begin to imagine what is not; but whereas what is truly heaven pleaseth them not, and what doth please them is not heaven, nor there to be found, they seldom or never endeavour in good earnest to exercise their thoughts about it.

It were well if darkness and ignorance of the true nature of the future state and eternal glory did not exceedingly prejudice believers themselves as unto their delight in them and meditations about them. They have nothing fixed or stated in their minds, which they can betake themselves unto in their thoughts when they would contemplate about them. And, by the way, whatever doth divert the minds of men from the power and life of spiritual worship, as do all pompous solemnities in the performance of it, doth greatly hinder them as unto right conceptions of a future state. There was a promise of eternal life given unto the saints under the old testament; but whereas they were obliged unto a worship that was carnal and outwardly pompous, they never had clear and distinct apprehensions of the future state of glory, for "life and immortality were brought to light by the gospel." Wherefore, although no man living can see or find out the infinite riches of eternal glory, yet it is the duty of all to be acquainted with the nature of it in general, so as that they may have fixed thoughts of it, love unto it, earnest desires after it; all under its own true and proper notion.

(*2dly.*) So great a part of mankind as the Mohammedans, unto whom God hath given all the principal and most desirable parts of

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the world to inhabit and possess, do conceive the state of *future blessedness to consist in the full satisfaction of their sensual lusts and pleasures.* And evidence this is that the religion which they profess hath no power or efficacy on their minds, to change them from the love of sin, or from placing their happiness in fulfilling the desires of the flesh. It doth not at all enlighten their minds to discern a beauty in spiritual things, nor excite their affections unto the love of them, nor free the soul to look after blessedness in such things as alone are suited unto its rational constitution; for if it did, they would place their happiness and blessedness in them. Wherefore, it is nothing but an artifice of the god of this world to blind the eyes of men, unto their eternal destruction.

(*3dly.*) Some of the philosophers of old did attain an apprehension that the blessedness of men in another world doth *consist in the soul's full satisfaction in the goodness and beauty of the divine nature.* And there is a truth in this notion, which contemplative men have adorned with excellent and rational discourses; and sundry who have been and are learned among Christians have greatly improved this truth by the light of the Scripture. From reason they take up with thoughts of the goodness, the amiableness, the self-sufficiency, the all-sufficient satisfactoriness of the infinite perfections of the divine nature. These things shine in themselves with such a glorious light as that there is no more required unto a perception of them but that men do not wilfully shut their eyes against it through bestial sensuality and love of sin. From reason also do they frame their conceptions concerning the capacity of the souls of men for the immediate enjoyment of God, and what is suited therein unto their utmost blessedness. No more is required unto these things but a due consideration of the nature of God and man, with our relation unto him and dependence on him. By the light of the Scripture they frame these things into that which they call the "beatifical vision;" whereby they intend all the ways whereby God, in the highest and immediate instances, can and doth communicate of himself unto the souls of men, and the utmost elevation of their intellectual capacities to receive those communications. It is such an intellectual apprehension of the divine nature and perfections, with ineffable love, as gives the soul the utmost rest and blessedness which its capacities can extend unto.

These things are so, and they have been by many both piously and elegantly illustrated; howbeit they are above the capacities of ordinary Christians,—they know not how to manage them in their minds, nor exercise their thoughts about them. They cannot reduce them unto present usefulness, nor make them subservient unto the exercise and increase of grace. And the truth is, the Scripture gives

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us another notion of heaven and glory, not contrary unto this, not inconsistent with it, but more suited unto the faith and experience of believers, and which alone can convey a true and useful sense of these things unto our minds. This, therefore, is diligently to be inquired into, and firmly stated in our thoughts and affections.

(*4thly.*) The principal notion which the Scripture gives us of the state of heavenly blessedness, and which the meanest believers are capable of improving in daily practice, is, that *faith shall be turned into sight, and grace into glory.* "We walk by faith, and not by sight," saith the apostle, 2 Cor. v. 7. Wherefore, this is the difference between our present and our future state, that sight hereafter shall supply the room of faith, 1 John iii. 2; and if sight come into the place of faith, then the object of that sight must be the same with the present object of our faith. So the apostle informs us, 1 Cor. xiii. 9, 10, 12, "We know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, that which is in part shall be done away. For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face." Those things which we now see darkly, as in a glass, we shall then have an immediate sight and full comprehension of; for that which is perfect must come and do away that which is in part. What, then, is the principal present object of faith as it is evangelical, into whose room sight must succeed? Is it not *the manifestation of the glory of the infinite wisdom, grace, love, kindness, and power of God in Christ, the revelation of the eternal counsels of his will and the ways of their accomplishment, unto the eternal salvation of the church, in and by him, with the glorious exaltation of Christ himself?* Wherefore, in the full, satisfactory representation of these things unto our souls, received by sight, or a direct, immediate intuition of them, doth the glory of heaven principally consist. We behold them now darkly, as in a glass,—that is the utmost which by faith we can attain unto; in heaven they shall be openly and fully displayed. The infinite, incomprehensible excellencies of the divine nature are not proposed in Scripture as the immediate object of our faith; nor shall they be so unto sight in heaven. The manifestation of them in Christ is the immediate object of our faith here, and shall be of our sight hereafter. Only through this manifestation of them we are led even by faith ultimately to acquiesce in them, as we shall in heaven be led by love perfectly to adhere unto them with delight ineffable. This is our immediate objective glory in heaven; we hope for no other. And this, if God will, I shall shortly more fully explain.

Whoever live in the exercise of faith, and have any experience of the life, power, and sweetness, of these heavenly things, unto whom they are a spring of grace and consolation, they are able to meditate

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on the glory of them in their full enjoyment. Think much of heaven, as that which will give you a perfect view and comprehension of the wisdom, and love, and grace of God in Christ, with those other things which shall be immediately declared.

Some perhaps will be ready to say, that if this be heaven, they can see no great glory in it, no such beauty as for which it should be desired. It may be so, for some have no instrument to take a view of invisible things but carnal imaginations. Some have no light, no principle, no disposition of mind or soul, whereunto these things are either acceptable or suitable. Some will go no farther in the consideration of the divine excellencies of God, and the faculties and actings of our souls, than reason will guide them; which may be of use. But we look for no other heaven, we desire none, but what we are led unto and prepared for by the light of the gospel; that which shall perfect all the beginnings of God's grace in us, not what shall be quite of another nature and destructive of them. We value not that heaven which is equally suited unto the desires and inclinations of the worst of men as well as of the best; for we know that they who like not grace here, neither do nor can like that which is glory hereafter. No man who is not acquainted experimentally, in some measure, with the life, power, and evidence of faith here, hath any other heaven in his aim but what is erected in his own imagination. The glory of heaven which the gospel prepares us for, which faith leads and conducts us unto, which the souls of believers long after, as that which will give full rest, satisfaction, and complacency, is the full, open, perfect manifestation of the glory of the wisdom, goodness, and love of God in Christ, in his person and mediation, with the revelation of all his counsels concerning them, and the communication of their effects unto us. He that likes it not, unto whom it is not desirable, may betake himself unto *Mohammed's paradise* or *the philosophers' speculations;* in *the gospel heaven* he hath no interest. These are the things which we see now darkly, as in a glass, by faith; in the view of them are our souls gradually changed into the likeness of God, and the comprehension of them is that which shall give us our utmost conformity and likeness unto him whereof our natures are capable. In a sense and experience of their reality and goodness, given us by the Holy Ghost, do all our spiritual consolations and joys consist. The effects produced by them in our souls are the first-fruits of glory. Our light, sense, experience, and enjoyment of these things, however weak and frequently interrupted; our apprehensions of them, however dark and obscure,—are the only means whereby we are "made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light."

To have the eternal glory of God in Christ, with all the fruits of

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his wisdom and love, whilst we are ourselves under the full participation of the effects of them, immediately, directly revealed, proposed, made known unto us, in a divine and glorious light, our souls being furnished with a capacity to behold and perfectly comprehend them,—this is the heaven which, according unto God's promise, we look for. But, as was said, these things shall be elsewhere more fully treated of.

It is true that there are sundry other things in particular that belong unto this state of glory; but what we have mentioned is the fountain and spring of them all. We can never have an immediate enjoyment of God in the immensity of his nature, nor can any created understanding conceive any such thing. God's communications of himself unto us and our enjoyment of him shall be in and by the manifestation of his glory in Christ. He who can see no glory, who is sensible of no blessedness, in these things, is a stranger unto that heaven which the Scripture reveals and which faith leads unto.

It may be inquired, What is the *subjective glory*, or what change is to be wrought in ourselves that we may enjoy this glory? Now, that consists principally as unto our souls, in *the perfection of all grace which is initially wrought and subjectively resides in us in this world*. The grace which we have here shall not be done away as unto its essence and nature, though somewhat of it shall cease as unto the manner of its operation. What soul could think with joy of going to heaven, if thereby he must lose all his present light, faith, and love of God, though he be told that he should receive that in lieu of them which is more excellent, whereof he hath no experience, nor can understand of what nature it is? When the saints enter into rest, their good works do follow them; and how can they do so if their grace do not accompany them, from whence they proceed? The perfection of our present graces, which are here weak and interrupted in their operations, is a principal eminency of the state of glory. *Faith* shall be heightened into vision, as was proved before; which doth not destroy its nature, but cause it to cease as unto its manner of operation towards things invisible. If a man have a weak, small faith in this life, with little evidence and no assurance, so that he doubts of all things, questions all things, and hath no comfort from what he doth believe; if afterward, through supplies of grace, he hath a mighty prevailing evidence of the things believed, is filled with comfort and assurance; this is not by a faith or grace of another kind than what he had before, but by the same faith raised unto a higher degree of perfection. When our Saviour cured the blind man and gave him his sight, Mark viii., at first he saw all things obscurely and imperfectly,—he saw "men as trees, walking,"

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verse 24; but on another application of virtue unto him, "he saw every man clearly," verse 25. It was not a sight of another kind which he then received than what he had at first; only its imperfection, whereby he "saw men as trees, walking," was taken away. Nor will our perfect vision of things above be a grace absolutely of another kind from the light of faith which we here enjoy; only what is imperfect in it will be done away, and it will be made meet for the present enjoyment of things here at a distance and invisible. *Love* shall have its perfection also, and the least alteration in its manner of operation of any grace whatever; and there is nothing that should more excite us to labour after a growth in love to God in Christ than this, that it shall to all eternity be the same in its nature and in all its operations, only both the one and the other shall be made absolutely perfect. The soul will by it be enabled to cleave unto God unchangeably, with eternal delight, satisfaction, and complacency. *Hope* shall be perfect in enjoyment, which is all the perfection it is capable of. So shall it be as unto other graces.

This *subjective perfection of our nature*, especially in all the faculties, powers, and affections of our souls and all their operations, belongs unto our blessedness, nor can we be blessed without it. All the objective glory in heaven would not, in our beholding and enjoyment of it (if it were possible), make us blessed and happy, if our own natures were not made perfect, freed from all disorder, irregular motions, and weak, imperfect operations. What is it, then, that must give our natures this subjective perfection? It is that grace alone whose beginnings we are here made partakers of; for therein consists the renovation of the image of God in us, and the perfect communication of that image unto us is the absolute perfection of our natures, the utmost which their capacity is suited unto. And this gives us the last thing to be inquired into,—namely, by what means in ourselves we shall eternally abide in that state; and this is, by the unalterable adherence of our whole souls unto God, in perfect love and delight. This is that whereby alone the soul reacheth unto the essence of God, and the infinite, incomprehensible perfections of his nature. For the perfect nature hereof, divine revelation hath left it under a veil, and so must we do also; nor do I designedly handle these things in this place, but only in the way of a direction how to exercise our thoughts about them.

This is the notion of heaven which those who are spiritually minded ought to be conversant withal; and the true stating of it by faith is a discriminating character of believers. This is no heaven unto any others. Those who have not an experience of the excellency of these things in their initial state in this world, and their incomparable transcendency unto all other things, cannot conceive how

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heavenly glory and blessedness should consist in them. Unskilful men may cast away *rough unwrought diamonds* as useless stones; they know not what polishing will bring them unto. Nor do men unskilful in the mysteries of godliness judge there can be any glory in *rough unwrought grace;* they know not what lustre and beauty the polishing of the heavenly hand will give unto it.

It is generally supposed that however men differ in and about religion here, yet they agree well enough about heaven; they would all go to the same heaven. But it is a great mistake; they differ in nothing more; they would not all go to the same heaven. How few are they who value that heavenly state which we have treated of, or do understand how any blessedness can consist in the enjoyment of it! But this, and no other heaven, would we go unto. Other notions there may be, there are of it; which being but fruits and effects of men's own imaginations, the more they dwell in the contemplation of them, the more carnal they may grow, at best the more superstitious. But spiritual thoughts of this heaven, consisting principally in freedom from all sin, in the perfection of all grace, in the vision of the glory of God in Christ, and all the excellencies of the divine nature as manifested in him, are an effectual means for the improvement of spiritual life and the increase of all graces in us; for they cannot but effect an assimilation in the mind and heart unto the things contemplated on, when the principles and seeds of them are already inlaid and begun. This is our first direction.

2. Having fixed *right notions and apprehensions* of heavenly things in our minds, it is our duty to *think and contemplate greatly on them* and our own concernment in them. Without this all our speculations concerning the nature of eternal things will be of no use unto us. And unto your encouragement and direction take these few short rules relating unto this duty:—1*st*. Here lies the great trial whether we are spiritually minded or no, by virtue of this rule, "If we are risen with Christ, we will mind the things that are above," Col. iii. 1. 2*dly*. Here lies the great means whereby we may attain farther degrees in that blessed frame of mind, if it be already formed in us, by virtue of that rule, "Beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, we are changed into the same image from glory to glory," 2 Cor. iii. 18. 3*dly*. Here lies the great evidence whether we have a real interest in the things above or no, whether we place our portion and blessedness in them, by virtue of that rule, "Where our treasure is, there will our hearts be also." Are they our treasure, our portion, our reward, in comparison whereof all other things are "but loss and dung?"—we shall assuredly be conversant in our minds about them. 4*thly*. It cannot be imagined that a man should have in him a principle cognate and suited unto things above, of the same

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kind and nature with them, that his soul should be under the conduct of those habits of grace which strive and naturally tend unto perfection, labouring greatly here under the weight of their own weaknesses, as it is with all who are truly spiritually minded, and yet not have his thoughts greatly exercised about these things, 1 John iii. 2, 3.

It were well if we would try ourselves by things of so uncontrollable evidence. What can any object unto the truth of these things or the necessity of this duty? If it be otherwise with us, it is from one of these two causes:—either we are not convinced of the truth and reality of them, or we have no delight in them because we are not spiritually minded. Do we think that men may turmoil themselves in earthly thoughts all the day long, and, when they are freed of their affairs, betake themselves unto those that are vain and useless, without any stated converse with things above, and yet enjoy life and peace? We must take other measures of things if we intend to live unto God, to be like him, and to come unto the enjoyment of him.

What is the matter with men that they are so stupid? They all generally desire to go to heaven, at least when they can live here no longer. Some, indeed, have no other regard unto it but only that they would not go to hell. But most would "die the death of the righteous," and have their "latter end like his;" yet few there are who endeavour to attain a right notion of it, to try how it is suited unto their principles and desires, but content themselves with such general notions of it as please their imaginations. It is no wonder if such persons seldom exercise their minds or thoughts about it; nor do they so much as pretend to be spiritually minded. But as for those who are instructed in these things, who profess their chiefest interest to lie in them, not to abound in meditation concerning them, it argues, indeed, that whatever they profess, they are earthly and carnal.

[3.] Again; meditate and *think of the glory of heaven so as to compare it with the opposite state of death and eternal misery.* Few men care to think much of hell, and the everlasting torments of the wicked therein. Those do so least who are in the most danger of falling thereinto. They put far from them the evil day, and suppose their covenant with death and hell to be sure. Some begin to advance an opinion that there is no such place; because it is their interest and desire that there should be none. Some, out of profaneness, make a scoff at it, as though a future judgment were but a fable. Most seem to think that there is a severity in thoughts about it, which it is not fit we should be too much terrified withal. Some transient thoughts they will have of it, but [they do] not suffer them to abide in their minds, lest they should be too much discomposed; or they think it not consistent with the goodness of Christ to leave any

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men in that condition, whereas there is more spoken directly of hell, its torments and their eternity, by himself than in all the Scripture besides. These thoughts, in most, proceed from an unwillingness to be troubled in their sins, and are useful unto none. It is the height of folly for men to endeavour the hiding of themselves for a few moments from that which is unavoidably coming upon them unto eternity, and the due consideration whereof is a means for an escape from it. But I speak only of true believers; and the more they are conversant in their thoughts about the future state of eternal misery, the greater evidence they have of the life and confidence of faith. It is a necessary duty to consider it, as what we were by nature obnoxious unto, as being "children of wrath;" what we have deserved by our personal sins, as "the wages of sin is death;" what we are delivered from through Jesus the deliverer, who "saves us from the wrath to come;" what expression it is of the indignation of God against sin, who hath "ordained Tophet of old,"—that we may be delivered from sin, kept up to an abhorrency of it, walking in humility, self-abasement, and the admiration of divine grace. This, therefore, is required of us, that in our thoughts and meditations we compare the state of blessedness and eternal glory, as a free and absolute effect of the grace of God in and through Christ Jesus, with that state of eternal misery which we had deserved; and if there be any spark of grace or of holy thankfulness in our hearts, it will be stirred up unto its due exercise.

Some, it may be, will say that they complained before that they cannot get their minds fixed on these things. Weakness, weariness, darkness, diversions, occasions, do prevalently obstruct their abiding in such thoughts. I shall speak farther unto this afterward. At present I shall only suggest two things:—First, If you cannot attain, yet *continue to follow after*. Get your minds in a perpetual endeavour after an abode in spiritual thoughts. Let your minds be rising towards them every hour, yea, a hundred times a-day, on all occasions, in a continual sense of duty; and sigh within yourselves for deliverance when you find disappointments, or a not-continuance in them. It is the sense of that place, Rom. viii. 23–26. Secondly, Take care *you go not backwards* and lose what you have wrought. If you neglect these things for a season, you will quickly find yourselves neglected by them. So I observe it every day in the hearing of the word. Whilst persons keep up themselves to a diligent attendance on it, where they find it preached unto their edification, they find great delight in it, and will undergo great difficulties for the enjoyment of it;—let them be diverted from it for a season, after a while it grows indifferent unto them; any thing will satisfy them that pretends unto the same duty.

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CHAPTER VII.

Especial objects of spiritual thoughts on the glorious state of heaven, and what belongs thereunto—First, of Christ himself—Thoughts of heavenly glory in opposition unto thoughts of eternal misery—The use of such thoughts—Advantage in sufferings.

IT will be unto our advantage, having stated *right notions of the glory of the blessed state above* in our minds, to fix on some particulars belonging unto it as the especial objects of our thoughts and meditations. As,—

I. Think much of *him who unto us is the life and centre of all the glory of heaven;* that is, Christ himself. I shall be very brief in treating hereof, because I have designed a peculiar treatise on this subject, of beholding the glory of Christ, both here and unto eternity.[1] At present, therefore, a few things only shall be mentioned, because on this occasion they are not to be omitted. The whole of the glory of the state above is expressed by being "ever with the Lord, where he is, to behold his glory;" for in and through him is the beatifical manifestation of God and his glory made for evermore, and through him are all communications of inward glory unto us. The present resplendency of heavenly glory consists in his mediatory ministry, as I have at large elsewhere declared;[2] and he will be the means of all-glorious communications between God and the church unto eternity. Wherefore, if we are spiritually minded, we should fix our thoughts on Christ above, as the centre of all heavenly glory. To help us herein, we may consider the things that follow:—

1. Faith hath continual recourse unto him, on the account of what *he did and suffered* for us in this world; for thereon pardon of sin, justification, and peace with God, do depend. This ariseth, in the first place, from a sense of our own wants. But love of him is no less necessary unto us than faith in him; and although we have powerful motives unto love from what he did and was in this world, yet the formal reason of our adherence unto him thereby is what he is in himself as he is now exalted in heaven. If we rejoice not at the remembrance of his present glory, if the thoughts of it be not frequent with us and refreshing unto us, how dwelleth his love in us?

2. Our hope is that ere long we shall be ever with him; and if so, it is certainly our wisdom and duty to be here with him as much as we can. It is a vain thing for any to suppose that they place their chiefest happiness in being for ever in the presence of Christ,

[1] See Meditations on the Glory of Christ, vol. i.—ED.

[2] See the author's treatise on the Person of Christ, vol. i. p. 252.—ED.

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who care not at all to be with him here as they may. And the only way of our being present with him here is, by faith and love acting themselves in spiritual thoughts and affections. And it is an absurd thing for men to esteem themselves Christians who scarce think of Christ all the day long; yet some, as one complained of old, scarce ever think or speak of him but when they swear by his name. I have read of them who have lived and died in continual contemplation on him, so far as the imperfection of our present state will admit; I have known them, I do know them, who call themselves unto a reproof if at any time he hath been many minutes out of their thoughts; and it is strange that it should be otherwise with them who love him in sincerity. Yet I wish I did not know more who give evidences that it is a rare thing for them to be exercised in serious thoughts and meditations about him; yea, there are some who are not averse upon occasions to speak of God, of mercy, of pardon, of his power and goodness, who, if you mention Christ unto them, with any thing of faith, love, trust in him, they seem unto them as a strange thing. Few there are who are sensible of any religion beyond what is natural. The things of the wisdom and power of God in Christ are foolishness unto them. Take some directions for the discharge of this duty:—In your thoughts of Christ, be very careful that they are *conceived and directed according to the rule of the word*, lest you deceive your own souls, and give up the conduct of your affections unto vain imaginations. Spiritual notions befalling carnal minds did once, by the means of superstition, ruin the power of religion. A conviction men had that they must think much of Jesus Christ, and that this would make them conformable unto him; but having no real evangelical faith, nor the wisdom of faith to exercise it in their thoughts and affections in a due manner, nor understanding what it was to be truly like unto him, they gave up themselves unto many foolish inventions and imaginations, by which they thought to express their love and conformity unto him. They would have images of him, which they would embrace, adore, and bedew with their tears. They would have crucifixes, as they called them, which they would carry about them, and wear next unto their hearts, as if they resolved to lodge Christ always in their bosoms. They would go in pilgrimage to the place where he died and rose again, through a thousand dangers, and purchase a feigned chip of a tree whereon he suffered, at the price of all they had in the world. They would endeavour, by long thoughtfulness, fastings, and watchings, to cast their souls into raptures and ecstasies, wherein they fancied themselves in his presence. They came at last to make themselves like him, in getting impressions of wounds on their sides, their hands, and feet. Unto all these things, and sundry others of

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a like nature and tendency, did superstition abuse and corrupt the minds of men, from a pretence of a principle of truth; for there is no more certain gospel truth than this, that believers ought continually to contemplate on Christ by the actings of faith in their thoughts and affections, and that thereby they are changed and transformed into his image, 2 Cor. iii. 18. And we are not to forego our duty because other men have been mistaken in theirs, nor part with practical, fundamental principles of religion because they have been abused by superstition. But we may see herein how dangerous it is to depart in any thing from the conduct of Scripture light and rule, when for want thereof the best and most noble endeavours of the minds of men, even to love Christ and to be like unto him, do issue in provocations of the highest nature.

Pray, therefore, that you may be kept unto the truth in all things, by a diligent attendance unto the only rule thereof and conscientious subjection of soul unto the authority of God in it; for we ought not to suffer our affections to be entangled with the paint or artificial beauty of any way or means of giving our love unto Christ which are not warranted by the word of truth. Yet I must say that I had rather be among them who, in the actings of their love and affection unto Christ, do fall into some irregularities and excesses in the manner of expressing it (provided their worship of him be neither superstitious nor idolatrous), than among those who, professing themselves to be Christians, do almost disavow their having any thoughts of or affection unto the person of Christ. But there is no need that we should foolishly run into either of these extremes. God hath in the Scripture sufficiently provided against them both. He hath both showed us the necessity of our diligent acting of faith and love on the person of Christ, and hath limited out the way and means whereby we may so do; and let our designs be what they will, where in any thing we depart from his prescriptions, we are not under the conduct of his Spirit, and so are sure to lose all that we do.

Wherefore, two things are required that we may thus think of Christ and meditate on him according to the mind and will of God:—(1.) That the means of bringing him to mind be what God hath promised and appointed. (2.) That the continued proposal of him as the object of our thoughts and meditations be of the same kind. For both these ends the superstitious minds of men invented the ways of images and crucifixes, with their appurtenances, before mentioned; and this rendered all their devotion an abomination. That which tends unto these ends among believers is the promise of the Spirit and the institutions of the word. Would you, then, think of Christ as you ought, take these two directions:—(1.) Pray that the Holy Spirit may abide with you continually, to mind you of him;

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which he will do in all in whom he doth abide, for it belongs unto his office. (2.) For more fixed thoughts and meditations, take some express place of Scripture wherein he is set forth and proposed, either in his person, office, or grace, unto you, Gal. iii. 1.

3. This duty lies at *the foundation of all that blessed communion and intercourse* that is between Jesus Christ and the souls of believers. This, I confess, is despised by some, and the very notion of it esteemed ridiculous; but they do therein no less than renounce Christianity, and turn the Lord Christ into an idol, that neither knoweth, seeth, nor heareth. But I speak unto them who are not utter strangers unto the life of faith, who know not what religion is unless they have real spiritual intercourse and communion with the Lord Christ thereby. Consider this, therefore, as it is in particular exemplified in the book of Canticles. There is not one instance of it to be found which doth not suppose a continued thoughtfulness of him. And in answer unto them, as they are actings of faith and love, wherein he is delighted, doth he by his Spirit insinuate into our minds and hearts a gracious sense of his own love, kindness, and relation unto us. The great variety wherein these things are mutually carried on between him and the church, the singular endearments which ensue thereon, and blessed estate in rest and complacency, do make up the substance of that holy discourse. No thoughts of Christ, then, proceeding from faith, accompanied with love and delight, shall be lost. They that sow this seed shall return with their sheaves; Christ will meet them with gracious intimations of his acceptance of them and delight in them, and return a sense of his own love unto them. He never will be, he never was, behind with any poor soul in returns of love. Those gracious and blessed promises which he hath made of "coming unto them" that believe in him, of "making his abode with them," and of "supping with them,"—all expressions of a gracious presence and intimate communion,—do all depend on this duty. Wherefore, we may consider three things concerning these thoughts of Christ:—(1.) That they are *exceeding acceptable* unto him, as the best pledges of our cordial affection: Cant. ii. 14, "O my dove, that art in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of the stairs, let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely." When a soul through manifold discouragements and despondencies withdraws, and as it were hides itself from him, he calleth to see a poor, weeping, blubbered face, and to hear a broken voice, that scarce goes beyond sighs and groans. (2.) These thoughts are the only means whereby we comply with the gracious invitations of his love mentioned before. By them do we hear his knocking, know his voice, and open the door of our hearts to give him entrance, that he may abide and sup with us.

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Sometimes, indeed, the soul is surprised into acts of gracious communion with Christ, Cant. vi. 12; but they are not to be expected unless we abide in those ways and means which prepare and make our souls meet for the reception and entertainment of him. Wherefore, (3.) Our want of experience in the power of this holy intercourse and communion with Christ ariseth principally from our defect in this duty. I have known one who, after a long profession of faith and holiness, fell into great darkness and distress merely on this account, that he did not experience in himself the sweetness, life, and power, of the testimonies given concerning the real communications of the love of Christ unto, and the intimation of his presence with, believers. He knew well enough the doctrine of it, but did not feel the power of it; at least he understood there was more in it than he had experience of. God carried him by faith through that darkness, but taught him withal that no sense of these things was to be let in to the soul but by constant thoughtfulness and contemplations on Christ. How many blessed visits do we lose by not being exercised unto this duty! See Cant. v. 1–3. Sometimes we are busy, sometimes careless and negligent, sometimes slothful, sometimes under the power of temptations, so that we neither inquire after nor are ready to receive them. This is not the way to have our joys abound.

4. Again (I speak now with especial respect unto him in heaven); the glory of his presence, as God and man eternally united; the discharge of his mediatory office, as he is at the right hand of God; the glory of his present acting for the church, as he is the minister of the sanctuary and the true tabernacle which God hath fixed and not man; the love, power, and efficacy of his intercession, whereby he takes care for the accomplishment of the salvation of the church; the approach of his glorious coming unto judgment,—are to be the objects of our daily thoughts and meditations.

Let us not mistake ourselves. To be spiritually minded is, not to have the notion and knowledge of spiritual things in our minds; it is not to be constant, no, nor to abound, in the performance of duties: both which may be where there is no grace in the heart at all. It is to have our minds really exercised with delight about heavenly things, the things that are above, especially Christ himself as at the right hand of God.

5. Again; so think of eternal things as continually to lay them in the balance against all the sufferings of this life. This use of it I have spoken unto somewhat before, and it is necessary it should be pressed upon all occasions. It is very probable that we shall yet suffer more than we have done. Those who have gone before us have done so; it is foretold in the Scripture that if we will live

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godly in Christ Jesus we must do so; we stand in need of it, and the world is prepared to bring it on us. And as we must suffer, so it is necessary, unto the glory of God and our own salvation, that we suffer in a due manner. Mere sufferings will neither commend us unto God nor any way advantage our own souls. When we suffer according to the will of God, it is an eminent grace, gift, and privilege, Phil. i. 29. But many things are required hereunto. It is not enough that men suppose themselves to suffer for conscience' sake,—though if we do not so suffer all our sufferings are in vain; nor is it enough that we suffer for this or that way of profession in religion, which we esteem to be true and according to the mind of God, in opposition unto what is not so. The glory of sufferings on these accounts solely hath been much sullied in the days wherein we live. It is evident that persons, out of a natural courage, accompanied with deep radicate persuasions, and having their minds influenced with some sinister ends, may undergo things hard and difficult in giving testimony unto what is not according to the mind of God. Examples we have had hereof in all ages, and in that wherein we live in an especial manner. See 1 Pet. iv. 14–16. We have had enough to take off all paint and appearance of honour from them who in their sufferings are deceived in what they profess. But men may from the same principles suffer for what is indeed according to the mind of God, yea, may give their bodies to be burned therein, and yet not to his glory nor their own eternal advantage. Wherefore we are duly to consider all things that are requisite to make our sufferings acceptable unto God and honourable unto the gospel.

I have observed in many a frame of spirit with respect unto sufferings that I never saw good event of when it was tried to the uttermost. Boldness, confidence, a pretended contempt of hardships, and scorning other men whom they suppose defective in these things, are the garments or livery they wear on this occasion. Such principles may carry men out in a bad cause, they will never do so in a good cause. Evangelical truth will not be honourably witnessed unto but by evangelical grace. Distrust of ourselves, a due apprehension of the nature of the evils to be undergone and of our own frailty, with continual prayers to be delivered from them or supported under them, and prudent care to avoid them without an inroad on conscience or neglect of duty, are much better preparations for an entrance into a state of suffering. Many things belong unto our learning aright this first and last lesson of the gospel, namely, of bearing the cross, or undergoing all sorts of sufferings for the profession of it; but they belong not unto our present occasion. This only is that which we now press as an evidence of our sincerity in our sufferings, and an effectual means to enable us cheerfully to undergo them,

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which is, to have such a continual prospect of the future state of glory as to lay it in the balance against all that we may undergo; for,—

1. To have our minds filled and possessed with thoughts thereof will give us an *alacrity* in our entrance into sufferings in a way of duty. Other considerations will offer themselves unto our relief, which will quickly fade and disappear. They are like a cordial water, which gives a little relief for a season, and then leaves the spirits to sink beneath what they were before it was taken. Some relieve themselves from the consideration of the nature of their sufferings; they are not so great but that they may conflict with them and come off with safety. But there is nothing of that kind so small as will not prove too hard and strong for us unless we have especial assistance. Some do the same from their duration; they are but for ten days or six months, and then they shall be free;—some from the compassion and esteem of men. These and the like considerations are apt to occur unto the minds of all sorts of persons, whether they are spiritually minded or no. But when our minds are accustomed unto thoughts of the "glory that shall be revealed," we shall cheerfully entertain every way and path that leads thereunto, as suffering for the truth doth in a peculiar manner. Through this medium we may look cheerfully and comfortably on the loss of name, reputation, goods, liberty, life itself, as knowing in ourselves that we have better and more abiding comforts to betake ourselves unto. And we can no other way glorify God by our alacrity in the entrance of sufferings than when it ariseth from a prospect into and valuation of those invisible things which he hath promised as an abundant recompense for all we can lose in this world.

2. The great aggravation of sufferings is their *long continuance*, without any rational appearance or hope of relief. Many who have entered into sufferings with much courage and resolution have been wearied and worn out with their continuance. Elijah himself was hereby reduced to pray that God would take away his life, to put an end unto his ministry and calamities. And not a few in all ages have been hereby so broken in their natural spirits, and so shaken in the exercise of faith, as that they have lost the glory of their confession, in seeking deliverance by sinful compliances in the denial of truth. And although this may be done out of mere weariness (as it is the design of Satan to "wear out the saints of the Most High"), with reluctance of mind, and a love yet remaining unto the truth in their hearts, yet hath it constantly one of these two effects:—Some, by the overwhelming sorrow that befalls them on the account of their failure in profession, and out of a deep sense of their unkindness unto the Lord Jesus, are stirred up immediately unto higher acts

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of confession than ever they were before engaged in, and unto a higher provocation of their adversaries, until their former troubles are doubled upon them, which they frequently undergo with great satisfaction. Instances of this nature occur in all stories of great persecutions. Others being cowed and discouraged in their profession, and perhaps neglected by them whose duty it was rather to restore them, have by the craft of Satan given place to their declensions, and become vile apostates. To prevent these evils, arising from the duration of sufferings without a prospect of deliverance, nothing is more prevalent than a constant contemplation on the future reward and glory. So the apostle declares it, Heb. xi. 35. When the mind is filled with the thoughts of the unseen glories of eternity, it hath in readiness what to lay in the balance against the longest continuance and duration of sufferings, which in comparison thereunto, at their utmost extent, are "but for a moment."

I have insisted the longer on these things, because they are the peculiar objects of the thoughts of them that are indeed spiritually minded.

CHAPTER VIII.

Spiritual thoughts of God himself—The opposition unto them and neglect of them, with their causes and the way of their prevalency—Predominant corruptions expelling due thoughts of God, how to be discovered, etc.—Thoughts of God, of what nature, and what they are to be accompanied withal, etc.

II. I HAVE spoken very briefly unto the first particular instance of the heavenly things that we are to fix our thoughts upon, namely, the person of Christ; and I have done it on the reason before mentioned, namely, that I intend a peculiar treatise on that subject, or an inquiry how we may behold the glory of Christ in this life, and how we shall do so unto eternity. That which I have reserved unto the last place, as unto the exercise of their thoughts about who are spiritually minded, is that which is the absolute foundation and spring of all spiritual things, namely, *God himself.* He is the fountain whence all these things proceed, and the ocean wherein they issue; he is their centre and circumference, wherein they all begin, meet, and end. So the apostle issues his profound discourse of the counsels of the divine will and mysteries of the gospel, Rom. xi. 36, "Of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever." All things arise from his power, and are all disposed by his wisdom into a tendency unto his glory: "Of him, and through him, and to him, are all things." Under that consideration alone are they to be the objects of our spiritual meditation,—namely, as they

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come from him and tend unto him. All other things are finite and limited, but they begin and end in that which is immense and infinite. So God is "all in all." He therefore is, or ought to be, the only supreme, absolute object of our thoughts and desires; other things are from and for him only. When our thoughts do not either immediately and directly, or mediately and by just consequence, tend unto and end in him, they are not spiritual, 1 Pet. i. 21.

To make way for directions how to exercise our thoughts on God himself, something must be premised concerning a sinful defect herein, with the causes of it:—

First, it is the great character of a man presumptuously and flagitiously wicked that "God is not in all his thoughts," Ps. x. 4; that is, he is in none of them. And of this want of thoughts of God there are many degrees, for all wicked men are not equally so forgetful of him:—

1. Some are under the power of *atheistical thoughts*. They deny or question, or do not avowedly acknowledge, the very being of God. This is the height of what the enmity of the carnal mind can rise unto. To acknowledge God, and yet to refuse to be subject to his law or will, a man would think were as bad, if not worse, than to deny the being of God; but it is not so. That is a rebellion against his authority, this a hatred unto the only Fountain of all goodness, truth, and being; and that because they cannot own it but withal they must acknowledge it to be infinitely righteous, holy, and powerful, which would destroy all their desires and security. Such may be the person in the psalm; for the words may be read, "All his thoughts are that there is no God:" howbeit the context describes him as one who rather despiseth his providence than denieth his being. But such there are, whom the same psalmist elsewhere brands for fools, though themselves seem to suppose that wisdom was born and will die with them, Ps. xiv. 1, liii. 1.

It may be, never any age since the flood did more abound with open atheism, among such as pretended unto the use and improvement of reason, than that wherein we live. Among the ancient civilized heathen, we hear ever and anon of a person branded for an atheist, yet we are not certain whether it was done justly or no; but in all nations of Europe at this day, cities, courts, towns, fields, armies, abound with persons who, if any credit may be given unto what they say or do, believe not that there is a God. And the reason hereof may be a little inquired into.

Now this is no other, in general, but that men have decocted and wasted the light and power of Christian religion. It is the fullest revelation of God that ever he made; it is the last that ever he will make in this world. If this be despised, if men rebel against the

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light of it, if they break the cords of it, and are senseless of its power, nothing can preserve them from the highest atheism that the nature of man is capable of. It is in vain to expect relief or preservation from inferior means when the highest and most noble are rejected. Reason or the light of nature gives evidences unto the being of God, and arguments are still well pleaded from them to the confusion of atheists; and they were sufficient to retain men in an acknowledgment of the divine power and Godhead who had no other, no higher evidences of them. But where men have had the benefit of divine revelation, where they have been educated in the principles of Christian religion, have had some knowledge and made some profession of them, and have, through the love of sin and hatred of every thing that is truly good, rejected all convictions from them concerning the being, power, and rule of God, they will not be kept unto a confession of them by any considerations that the light of nature can suggest.

There are therefore, among others, three reasons why there are more atheists among them who live where the Christian religion is professed and the power of it rejected, than among any other sort of men, even than there were among the heathens themselves:—

(1.) God hath designed to *magnify his word above all his name*, or all other ways of the revelation of himself unto the children of men, Ps. cxxxviii. 2. Where, therefore, this is rejected and despised, he will not give the honour unto reason or the light of nature, that they shall preserve the minds of men from any evil whatever. Reason shall not have the same power and efficacy on the minds of men who reject the light and power of divine revelation by the word, as it hath or may have on them whose best guide it is, who never enjoyed the light of the gospel; and therefore there is oft-times more common honesty among civilized heathens and Mohammedans than amongst degenerate Christians; and for the same reason the children of professors are sometimes irrecoverably profligate. It will be said, "Many are recovered unto God by afflictions who have despised the word." But it is otherwise. Never any were converted unto God by afflictions who had rejected the word. Men may by afflictions be recalled unto the light of the word, but none are immediately turned unto God by them;—as a good shepherd, when a sheep wanders from the flock, and will not hear his call, sends out his dog, which stops him and bites him; hereon he looks about him, and, hearing the call of the shepherd, returns again to the flock, Job xxxiii. 19–25. But with this sort of persons it is the way of God, that when the principal means of the revelation of himself, and wherein he doth most glorify his wisdom and his goodness, are despised, he will not only take off the efficacy of inferior means, but

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judicially harden the hearts and blind the eyes of men, that such means shall be of no use unto them. See Isa. vi. 9, 10; Acts xiii. 40, 41; Rom. i. 21, 28; 2 Thess. ii. 11, 12.

(2.) The contempt of gospel light and Christian religion, as it is *supernatural* (which is the beginning of transgression unto all atheists among us), begets in and leaves on the mind such a *depraved, corrupt habit,* such a congeries of all evils that the hatred of the goodness, wisdom, and grace of God can produce, that it cannot but be wholly inclined unto the worst of evils, as all our original vicious inclinations succeeded immediately on our rejection and loss of the image of God. The best things, corrupted, yield the worst savour; as manna stunk and bred worms. The knowledge of the gospel being rejected, stinking worms take the place of it in the mind, which grow into vipers and scorpions. Every degree of apostasy from gospel truth brings in a proportionate degree of inclination unto wickedness into the hearts and minds of men, 2 Pet. ii. 21; and that which is total, unto all the evils that they are capable of in this world. Whereas, therefore, multitudes, from their darkness, unbelief, temptation, love of sin, pride and contempt of God, do fall off from all subjection of soul and conscience unto the gospel, either notionally or practically, deriding or despising all supernatural revelations, they are a thousand times more disposed unto downright atheism than persons who never had the light or benefit of such revelations. Take heed of decays! Whatever ground the gospel loseth in our minds, sin possesseth it for itself and its own ends.

Let none say it is otherwise with them. Men grow cold and negligent in the duties of gospel worship, public and private; which is to reject gospel light. Let them say and pretend what they please, that in other things, in their minds and conversations, it is well with them: indeed it is not so. Sin will, sin doth, one way or other, make an increase in them proportionate unto these decays, and will sooner or later discover itself so to do; and themselves, if they are not utterly hardened, may greatly discover it, inwardly in their peace, or outwardly in their lives.

(3.) Where men are *resolved not to see,* the greater the light is that shines about them the faster they must close their eyes. All atheism springs from a resolution not to see things invisible and eternal. Love of sin, a resolved continuance in the practice of it, the effectual power of vicious inclinations in opposition unto all that is good, make it the interest of such men that there should be no God to call them to an account; for a supreme, unavoidable judge, an eternal rewarder of good and evil, is inseparable from the first notion of a Divine Being. Whereas, therefore, the most glorious

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light and uncontrollable evidence of these things shines forth in the Scripture, men that will abide by their interest to love and live in sin must close their eyes with all the arts and powers that they have, or else it will pierce into their minds unto their torment. This they do by downright atheism, which alone pretends to give them security against the light of divine revelation. Against all other convictions they might take shelter from their fears under less degrees of it.

It is not, therefore, unto the disparagement but honour of the gospel that so many avow themselves to be atheists, in those places wherein the truth of it is known and professed; for none can have the least inclination or temptation thereunto until they have beforehand rejected the gospel, which immediately exposeth them unto the worst of evils.

Nor is there any means for the recovery of such persons. The opposition that hath been made unto atheism, with arguments for the divine being and existence of God, taken from reason and natural light, in this and other ages, hath been of good use to cast contempt on the pretences of evil men to justify themselves in their folly; but that they have so much as changed the minds of any I much doubt. No man is under the power of atheistical thoughts, or can be so long, but he that is ensnared into them by his desire to live securely and uncontrollably in sin. Such persons know it to be their interest that there should be no God, and are willing to take shelter under the bold expressions and reasonings of them who by the same means have hardened and blinded their minds into such foolish thoughts. But the most rational arguments for the being of the Deity will never prove an effectual cure unto a predominant love of and habitual course in sin, in them who have resisted and rejected the means and motives unto that end declared in divine revelation; and unless the love of sin be cured in the heart, thoughts in the acknowledgment of God will not be fixed in the mind.

2. There are those of whom also it may be said that "God is not in all their thoughts," though they acknowledge his *essence and being;* for they are not practically influenced in any thing by the notions they have of him. Such is the person of whom this is affirmed, Ps. x. 4. He is one who, through pride and profligacy, with hardness in sin, regards not God in the rule of the world, verses 4, 5, 11, 13. Such is the world filled withal at this day, as they are described, Tit. i. 16, "They profess that they know God, but in works deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate." They think, they live, they act in all things as if there were no God, at least as if they never thought of him with fear and rever-

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ence. And, for the most part, we need not seek far for evidences of their disregard of God,—the "pride of their countenances testifies against them," Ps. x. 4; and if they are followed farther, cursed oaths, licentiousness of life, and hatred of all that is good, will confirm and evidence the same. Such as these may own God in words, may be afraid of him in dangers, may attend outwardly on his worship; but they think not of God at all in a due manner,—"he is not in all their thoughts."

3. There are yet less degrees of this disregard of God and forgetfulness of him. Some are so filled with thoughts of the world and the occasions of life that it is impossible they should think of God as they ought; for as the love of God and the love of the world in prevalent degrees are inconsistent, (for if a man love this world, how dwelleth the love of God in him?) so thoughts of God and of the world in the like degree are inconsistent. This is the state of many, who yet would be esteemed spiritually minded: They are continually conversant in their minds about earthly things. Some things impose themselves on them under the notion of duty; they belong unto their callings, they must be attended unto. Some are suggested unto their minds from daily occasions and occurrences. Common converse in the world engageth men into no other but worldly thoughts. Love and desire of earthly things, their enjoyment and increase, exhaust the vigour of their spirits all the day long. In the midst of a multitude of thoughts, arising from these and the like occasions, whilst their hearts and heads are reeking with the steam of them, many fall immediately in their seasons unto the performance of holy duties. Those times must suffice for thoughts of God. But notwithstanding such duties, what through the want of a due preparation for them, what through the fulness of their minds and affections with other things, and what through a neglect of exercising grace in them, it may be said comparatively that "God is not in all their thoughts."

I pray God that this, at least as unto some degrees of it, be not the condition of many among us. I speak not now of men who visibly and openly live in sin, profane in their principles, and profligate in their lives. The prayers of such persons are an abomination unto the Lord, neither have they ever any thoughts of him which he doth accept. But I speak of them who are sober in their lives, industrious in their callings, and not openly negligent about the outward duties of religion. Such men are apt to approve of themselves, and others also to speak well of them, for these things are in themselves commendable and praiseworthy; but if they are traced home, it will be found, as to many of them, that "God is not in all their thoughts" as he ought to be. Their earthly conversation, their vain communi-

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cation, with their foolish designs, do all manifest that the vigour of their spirits and most intense contrivances of their minds are engaged unto things below. Some refuse, transient, unmanaged thoughts are sometimes cast away on God; which he despiseth.

4. Where persons do *cherish secret predominant lusts in their hearts and lives*, God is not in their thoughts as he ought to be. He may be, he often is, much in the words of such persons, but in their thoughts he is not, he cannot be, in a due manner. And such persons no doubt there are. Ever and anon we hear of one and another whose secret lusts break forth into a discovery. They flatter themselves for a season, but God ofttimes so orders things in his holy providence that their iniquity shall be found out to be hateful. Some hateful lust discovers itself to be predominant in them: one is drunken, another unclean, a third an oppressor. Such there were ever found among professors of the gospel, and that in the best of times: among the apostles one was a traitor, "a devil." Of the first professors of Christianity, there were those "whose god was their belly, whose end was destruction, who minded earthly things," Phil. iii. 18, 19. Some may take advantage of this acknowledgment that there are such evils among such as are called professors; and it must be confessed that great scandal is given hereby unto the world, casting both them that give it and them to whom it is given under a most dreadful woe: but we must bear the reproach of it as they did of old, and commit the issue of all things unto the watchful care of God. However, it is good in such a season to be jealous over ourselves and others, to "exhort one another daily, while it is called To-day, lest any be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin," Heb. iii. 13. See chap. xii. 13–17. And because those with whom it is thus cannot be spiritually minded, [and] yet are there some difficulties in the case, as unto the predominancy of a secret lust or sin, I shall consider it somewhat more distinctly:—

(1.) We must distinguish between a *time of temptation* in some and *the ordinary state of mind and affections* in others. There may be a season wherein God, in his holy, wise ordering of all things towards us, and for his own glory, in his holy, blessed ends, may suffer a lust or corruption to break loose in the heart, to strive, tempt, suggest, tumultuate, unto the great trouble and disquietude of the mind and conscience; neither can it be denied but that, falling in conjunction with some vigorous temptation, it may proceed so far as to surprise the person in whom it is into actual sin, unto his defilement and amazement. In this case no man can say, "I am tempted of God;" for "God tempteth no man, but every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed." But yet temptations, of what sort soever they be, so far as they are afflictive, cor-

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rective, or penal, are ordered and disposed by God himself; for there is no evil of that nature and he hath not done it. And where he will have the power of any corruption to be afflictive in any instance, two things may safely be ascribed to him:—

[1.] He *withholds the supplies of that grace* whereby it might be effectually mortified and subdued. He can give in a sufficiency of efficacious grace to repel any temptation, to subdue any or all our lusts and sins; for he can and doth work in us to will and to do according to his pleasure. Ordinarily he doth so in them that believe; so that although their lusts may rebel and war, they cannot defile or prevail. But unto the continual supplies of this actual prevailing grace he is not obliged. When it may have a tendency unto his holy ends, he may and doth withhold it. When, it may be, a proud soul is to be humbled, a careless soul to be awakened, an unthankful soul to be convinced and rebuked, a backsliding soul to be recovered, a froward, selfish, passionate soul to be broken and meekened, he can leave them for a season unto the sore exercise of a prevalent corruption; which, under his holy guidance, shall contribute greatly unto his blessed ends. It was so in the temptation of Paul, 2 Cor. xii. 7–9. If a man, through disorder and excesses, is contracting many habitual distempers of body, which gradually and insensibly tend unto his death, it may be an advantage to be cast into a violent fever, which threatens immediately to take away his life; for he will hereby be thoroughly awakened unto the consideration of his danger, and not only labour to be freed from his fever, but also for the future to watch against those disorders and excesses which cast him into that condition. And sometimes a loose, careless soul, that walks in a secure, formal profession, contracts many spiritual diseases, which tend unto death and ruin. No arguments or considerations can prevail with him to awaken himself, to "shake himself out of the dust," and to betake himself unto a more diligent and humble walking before God. In this state, it may be, through the permission of God, he is surprised into some open, actual sin. Hereon, through the vigorous actings of an enlightened conscience, and the stirrings of any sparks of grace which yet remain, he is amazed, terrified, and stirs up himself to seek after deliverance.

[2.] God may and doth in his providence *administer objects and occasions of men's lusts, for their trial.* He will place them in such relations, in such circumstances, as shall be apt to provoke their affections, passions, desires, and inclinations, unto those objects that are suited unto them.

In this state any lust will quickly get such power in the mind and affections as to manage continual solicitations unto sin. It will not only dispose the affections towards it, but multiply thoughts about

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it, and darken the mind as unto those considerations which ought to prevail unto its mortification. In this condition it is hard to conceive how God should be in the thoughts of man in a due manner. However, this state is very different from the habitual prevalency of any secret sin or corruption in the ordinary course of men's walking in the world, and therefore I do not directly intend it.

If any one shall inquire how we may know this difference, namely, that is between the occasional prevalency of any lust or corruption in conjunction with a temptation, and the power of sin in any instance habitually and constantly complied withal, or indulged in the mind, I answer,—

1*st*. It is no great matter whether we are able to distinguish between them or no; for the end why God suffers any corruption to be such a snare and temptation, such a thorn and brier, is, to awaken the souls of men out of their security, and to humble them for their pride and negligence. The more severe their apprehensions concerning it, the more effectual it will be unto this end and purpose. It is good, it may be, that the soul should apprehend more of what is sinful in it as it is a corruption than of what is afflictive in it as it is a temptation; for if it be conceived as a predominant lust, if there be any spark of grace remaining in the soul, it will not rest until in some measure it be subdued. It will also immediately put it upon a diligent search into itself, which will issue in deep self-abasement, the principal end designed. But,—

2*dly*. For the relief of them that may be perplexed in their minds about their state and condition, I say there is an apparent difference between these things. A lust or corruption arising up or breaking forth into a violent temptation is the continual burden, grief, and affliction of the soul wherein it is. And as the temptation, for the most part, which befalls such a person will give him no rest from its reiterated solicitations, so he will give the temptation no rest, but will be continually conflicting with it and contending against it. It fills the soul with an amazement at itself and continual self-abhorrency, that any such seeds of filth and folly should be yet remaining in it. With them in whom any sin is ordinarily prevalent it is otherwise. According to their light and renewed occasional convictions, they have trouble about it; they cannot but have so, unless their consciences are utterly seared. But this trouble respects principally, if not solely, its guilt and effects. They know not what may ensue on their compliance with it, in this world and another. Beyond this they like it well enough, and are not willing to part with it. It is this latter sort of persons of whom we speak at present.

(2.) We must distinguish between the *perplexing solicitation* of

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any lust and *the conquering predominancy* of it. The evil that is present with us will be soliciting and pressing unto sin of its own accord, even where there is no such especial temptation as that spoken of before. So is the case stated, so are the nature and operations of it described, Rom. vii., Gal. v. 17. And sometimes an especial, particular lust may be so warmed and fomented by men's constitutions within, or be so exposed unto provoking, exciting occasions without, as to bring perpetual trouble on the mind; yet this may be where no sin hath the predominancy inquired after. And the difference between the perplexing solicitation of any corruption unto sin and the conquering prevalency of it lies in this, that under the former, the thoughts, contrivances, and actings of the mind, are generally disposed and inclined unto an opposition unto it, and a conflict with it, how it may be obviated, defeated, destroyed, how an absolute victory may be obtained against it; yea, death itself is sweet unto such persons, under this notion, as it is that which will deliver them from the perplexing power of their corruptions. So is the state of such a soul at large represented, Rom. vii. In the other case, namely, of its predominancy, it disposeth of the thoughts actually, for the most part, to make provision for the flesh, and to fulfil it in the lusts thereof. It fills the mind with pleasing contemplations of its object, and puts it on contrivances for satisfaction; yea, part of the bitterness of death unto such persons is, that it will make an everlasting separation between them and the satisfaction they have received in their lusts. It is bitter in the thoughts of it unto a worldly-minded man, because it will take him from all his enjoyments, his wealth, profits, and advantages. It is so unto the sensual person, as that which finally determines all his pleasures.

(3.) There is a difference in the *degrees* of such a predominant corruption. In some it taints the affections, vitiates the thoughts, and works over the will unto acts of a secret complacency in sin, but proceeds no farther. The whole mind may be vitiated by it, and rendered, in the multitude of its thoughts, vain, sensual, or worldly, according as is the nature of the prevailing corruption; yet here God puts bounds unto the raging of some men's corruptions, and says to their proud waves, "Thus far shall ye proceed, and no farther." He either lays a restraint on their minds, that when lust hath fully conceived it shall not bring forth sin, or he sets a hedge before them in his providence, that they shall not be able in their circumstances to find their way unto what perhaps they do most earnestly desire. A woful life it is that such persons lead. They are continually tortured between their corruptions and convictions, or the love of sin and fear of the event. With others it pursues its course into outward actual sins: which in some are discovered in this world, in

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others they are not; for some men's sins go before them unto judgment, and some follow after. Some fall into sin upon surprisal, from a concurrence of temptation with corruption and opportunities. Some habituate themselves unto a course in sin. Though in many it be not discovered, in some it is. But among those who have received any spiritual light, and made profession of religion thereon, this seldom falls out but from the great displeasure of God; for when men have long given way unto the prevalency of sin in their affections, inclinations, and thoughts, and God hath set many a hedge before them to give bounds unto their inclinations and to shut up the womb of sin, sometimes by afflictions, sometimes by fears and dangers, sometimes by the word, and yet the bent of their spirits is towards their sin, God takes off his hand of restraint, removes his hinderances, and gives them up unto their own hearts' lusts, to do the things that are not convenient. All things hereon suit their desires, and they rush into actual sins and follies, setting their feet in the paths that go down to the chambers of death. The uncontrollable power of sin in such persons, and the greatness of God's displeasure against them, make their condition most deplorable.

Those that are in this state, of either sort, the first or the latter, are remote from being spiritually minded, nor is "God in all their thoughts" as he ought to be; for,—

First, They *will not* so think and meditate on God. Their delight is turned another way. Their affections, which are the spring of their thoughts, which feed them continually, do cleave unto the things which are most adverse unto him. Love of sin is gotten to be the spring in them, and the whole stream of the thoughts which they choose and delight in are towards the pleasures of it. If any thoughts of God come in, as a faint tide for a few minutes, and drive back the other stream, they are quickly repelled and carried away with the strong current of those which proceed from their powerful inclinations. Yet may such persons abide in the performance of outward holy duties, or attendance unto them. Pride of, or satisfaction in, their gifts may give them delight in their own performances, and something in those of others they may be exceedingly pleased withal, as it is expressly affirmed, Ezek. xxxiii. 31, 32. But in these things they have no *immediate real thoughts of God*, none that they delight in, none that they seek to stir up in themselves; and those which impose themselves on them they reject.

Secondly, As they *will not*, so they *dare not*, think of God. They will not, because of the power of their lusts; they dare not, because of their guilt. No sooner should they begin to think of him in good earnest, but their sin would lose all its desirable forms and appearances, and represent itself in the horror of guilt alone. And in that

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condition all the properties of the divine nature are suited to increase the dread and terror of the sinner. Adam had heard God's voice before with delight and satisfaction; but on the hearing of the same voice after he had sinned, he hid himself and cried that he was afraid. There is a way for men to think of God *with the guilt of sin upon them* which they intend to *forsake*, but none for any to do it with the guilt of sin which they resolve to *continue in*. Wherefore, of all these sorts of persons it may be said that "God is not in all their thoughts," and therefore are they far enough from being spiritually minded; for unless we have many thoughts of God we cannot be so. Yea, moreover, there are two things required unto those thoughts which we have of God, that there be an evidence of our being so:—

[1.] That we *take delight in them:* Ps. xxx. 4, "Sing unto the LORD, O ye saints of his, and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness." The remembrance of God delighteth and refresheth the hearts of his saints, and stirs them up unto thankfulness:—

1*st.* They rejoice *in what God is in himself.* Whatever is good, amiable, or desirable; whatever is holy, just, and powerful; whatever is gracious, wise, and merciful, and all that is so,—they see and apprehend in God. That *God is what he is*, is the matter of their chiefest joy. Whatever befalls them in this world, whatever troubles and disquietment they are exercised withal, the remembrance of God is a satisfactory refreshment unto them; for therein they behold all that is good and excellent, the infinite centre of all perfections. Wicked men would have God to be any thing but what he is; nothing that God is really and truly pleaseth them. Wherefore, they either frame false notions of him in their minds, as Ps. l. 21, or they think not of him at all, at least [not] as they ought, unless sometimes they tremble at his anger and power. Some benefit they suppose may be had by what he can do, but how there can be any delight in what he is they know not; yea, all their trouble ariseth from hence, that he is what he is. It would be a relief unto them if they could make any abatement of his power, his holiness, his righteousness, his omnipresence; but his saints, as the psalmist speaks, "give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness."

And when we can delight in the thoughts of what God is in himself, of his infinite excellencies and perfections, it gives us a threefold evidence of our being spiritually minded:—(1*st.*) In that it is such an evidence that we have a gracious interest in those excellencies and perfections, whereon we can say with rejoicing in ourselves, "*This* God," thus holy, thus powerful, thus just, good, and gracious, "is our God for ever and ever; he will be our guide unto death." So the psalmist, under the consideration of his own frailty and apprehensions of

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death in the midst of his years, comforts and refresheth himself with thoughts of God's eternity and immutability, with his interest in them, Ps. cii. 23–28. And God himself proposeth unto us his infinite immutability as the ground whereon we may expect safety and deliverance, Mal. iii. 6. When we can thus think of God and of what he is with delight, it is, I say, an evidence that we have a gracious covenant interest even in what God is in himself; which none have but those who are spiritually minded. (*2dly.*) It is an evidence that the *image of God is begun to be wrought* in our own souls, and that we approve of and rejoice in it more than in all other things whatever. Whatever notions men may have of the divine goodness, holiness, righteousness, and purity, they are all but barren, jejune, and fruitless, unless there be a similitude and conformity unto them wrought in their minds and souls. Without this they cannot rejoice in the thoughts and remembrance of the divine excellencies. Wherefore, when we can do so, when such meditations of God are sweet unto us, it is an evidence that we have some experience in ourselves of the excellency of the image of those perfections, and that we rejoice in them above all things in this world. (*3dly.*) They are so also in that they manifest that we do discern and judge that *our eternal blessedness doth consist in the full manifestation and our enjoyment of God in what he is, and of all his divine excellencies.* This men for the most part take for granted, but how it should be so they know not. *They* understand it in some measure whose hearts are here deeply affected with delight in them; they are able to believe that the manifestation and enjoyment of the divine excellencies will give eternal rest, satisfaction, and complacency unto their souls. No wicked man can look upon it otherwise than as a torment, to abide for ever with "eternal holiness," Isa. xxxiii. 14. And we ourselves can have no present prospect into the fulness of future glory, when God shall be all in all, but through the delight and satisfaction which we have here in the contemplation of what God is in himself as the centre of all divine perfections.

I would therefore press this unknown, this neglected duty on the minds of those of us in an especial manner who are visibly drawing nigh unto eternity. The days are coming wherein what God is in himself (that is, as manifested and exhibited in Christ), shall alone be, as we hope, the eternal blessedness and reward of our souls. Is it possible that any thing should be more necessary for us, more useful unto us, than to be exercised in such thoughts and contemplations? The benefits we may have hereby are not to be reckoned; some of them only may be named: as,—[1*st.*] We shall have the best trial of ourselves how our hearts really stand affected towards God; for if upon examination we find ourselves not really to delight and re-

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joice in God for what he is in himself, and that all perfections are eternally resident in him, how dwelleth the love of God in us? But if we can truly "rejoice at the remembrance of his holiness," in the thoughts of what he is, our hearts are upright with him. [*2dly.*] This is that which will effectually *take off our thoughts and affections* from things here below. One spiritual view of the divine goodness, beauty, and holiness, will have more efficacy to raise the heart unto a contempt of all earthly things than any other evidences whatever. [*3dly.*] It will increase *the grace of being heavenly minded* in us, on the grounds before declared. [*4thly.*] It is the best, I had almost said it is *the only, preparation* for the future full enjoyment of God. This will gradually lead us into his presence, take away all fears of death, increase our longing after eternal rest, and ever make us groan to be unclothed. Let us not, then, cease labouring with our hearts, until, through grace, we have a spiritually-sensible delight and joy in the remembrances and thoughts of what God is in himself.

2dly. In thoughts of God, his saints rejoice at the *remembrance of what he is, and what he will be unto them.* Herein have they regard unto all the holy relations that he hath taken on himself towards them, with all the effects of his covenant in Christ Jesus. To that purpose were some of the last words of David: 2 Sam. xxiii. 5, "Although my house be not so with God; yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure: for this is all my salvation, and all my desire." In the prospect he had of all the distresses that were to befall his family, he triumphantly rejoiced in the everlasting covenant that God had made with him. In these thoughts his saints take delight; they are sweet unto them, and full of refreshment: "Their meditations of him are sweet," and they are "glad in the LORD," Ps. civ. 34. Thus is it with them that are truly spiritually minded. They not only think much of God, but they take delight in these thoughts,—they are sweet unto them; and not only so, but they have no solid joy or delight but in their thoughts of God, which therefore they retreat unto continually. They do so especially on great occasions, which of themselves are apt to divert them from them. As suppose a man hath received a signal mercy, with the matter whereof he is exceedingly affected and delighted; the minds of some men are apt on such occasions to be filled with thoughts of what they have received, and their affections to be wholly taken up with it, but he who is spiritually minded will immediately retreat unto thoughts of God, placing his delight and taking up his satisfaction in him. And so, on the other side, great distresses, prevalent sorrows, strong pains, violent distempers, are apt of themselves to take up and exercise all the thoughts of men about them; but those who are spiritually minded will in

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and under them all continually betake themselves unto thoughts of God, wherein they find relief and refreshment against all that they feel or fear. In every state, their principal joy is in "the remembrance of his holiness."

[2.] That they be accompanied *with godly fear and reverence.* These are required of us in all wherein we have to do with God, Heb. xii. 28, 29; and as the Scripture doth not more abound with precepts unto any duty, so the nature of God and our own, with the infinite distance between them, make it indispensably necessary even in the light of the natural conscience. Infinite greatness, infinite holiness, infinite power, all which God is, command the utmost reverential fear that our natures are capable of. The want hereof is the spring of innumerable evils; yea, indeed, of all that is so. Hence are blasphemous abuses of the holy name of God in cursed oaths and execrations; hence it is taken in vain, in ordinary exclamations; hence is all formality in religion.

It is the spiritual mind alone that can reconcile those things which are prescribed to us as our duty towards God. "To delight and rejoice in him always, to triumph in the remembrance of him, to draw nigh unto him with boldness and confidence," are on the one hand prescribed unto us; and on the other it is so "that we fear and tremble before him, that we fear that great and dreadful name the LORD our God, that we have grace to serve him with reverence and godly fear, because he is a consuming fire." These things carnal reason can comprehend no consistency in;—what it is afraid of it cannot delight in; and what it delights in it will not long fear. But the consideration of faith, concerning what God is in himself, and what he will be unto us, gives these different graces their distinct operations, and a blessed reconciliation in our souls. Wherefore, all our thoughts of God ought to be accompanied with a holy awe and reverence, from a due sense of his greatness, holiness, and power. Two things will utterly vitiate all thoughts of God and render them useless unto us,—*vain curiosity* and *carnal boldness.*

1*st.* It is unimaginable how the subtile disquisitions and disputes of men about the nature, properties, and counsels of God, have been corrupted, rendered sapless and useless, by *vain curiosity*, and striving for an artificial accuracy in the expression of men's apprehensions. When the wits and minds of men are engaged in such thoughts, "God is not in all their thoughts," even when all their thoughts are concerning him. When once men are got into their metaphysical curiosities and logical niceties in their contemplations about God and his divine properties, they bid farewell, for the most part, unto all godly fear and reverence. 2*dly.* Others are so under the power of *carnal boldness*, that they think of God with no other respect than

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if they thought of worms of the earth like themselves. There is no holy awfulness upon their minds and souls in the mention of his name. By these things may our thoughts of God be so vitiated that the heart shall not in them be affected with a reverence of him, nor any evidence be given that we are spiritually minded.

It is this *holy reverence* that is the means of bringing in sanctifying virtue into our souls from God, upon our thoughts of him. None that thinks of God with a due reverence but he shall be sensible of advantage by it. Hereby do we sanctify God in our access unto him; and when we do so, he will sanctify and purify our hearts by those very thoughts in which we draw nigh to him.

We may have many sudden, occasional, transient thoughts of God, that are not introduced into our minds by a preceding reverential fear; but if they leave not that fear on our hearts in proportion unto their continuance with us, they are of no value, but will insensibly habituate us unto a common, bold frame of spirit, which he despises.

So is it in the case of thoughts of a contrary nature. Thoughts of sin, of sinful objects, may arise in our minds from the remainders of corruption, or be occasioned by the temptations and suggestions of Satan. If these are immediately rejected and cast out of us, the soul is not more prejudiced by their entrance than it is advantaged by their rejection, through the power of grace. But if they make frequent returns into the minds of men, or make any abode or continuance in their soliciting of the affections, they greatly defile the mind and conscience, disposing the person unto the farther entertainment of them. So, if our occasional thoughts of God do immediately leave us, and pass away without much affecting our minds, we shall have little or no benefit by them; but if, by their frequent visits and some continuance with us, they dispose our souls unto a holy reverence of God, they are a blessed means of promoting our sanctification. Without this, I say, there may be thoughts of God unto no advantage of the soul.

There is implanted on our nature such a sense of a divine Power and Presence as that on all sudden occasions and surprisals it will act itself according unto that sense and apprehension. There is "vox naturæ clamantis ad Dominum naturæ,"—a voice in nature itself, upon any thing that is suddenly too hard for it, which cries out immediately unto the God of nature. So men, on such occasions, without any consideration, are surprised into a calling on the name of God and crying unto him. And from the same natural apprehension it is that wicked and profane persons will break forth on all occasions into cursed swearing by his name. So men in such ways have thoughts of God without either reverence or godly fear, without giving any glory unto him, and, for the most part, unto their

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own disadvantage. Such are all thoughts of God that are not accompanied with holy fear and reverence.

There is scarce any duty that ought at present to be more pressed on the consciences of men than this of keeping up a constant holy reverence of God in all wherein they have to do with him, both in private and public, in their inward thoughts and outward communication. Formality hath so prevailed on religion, and that under the most effectual means of its suppression, that very many do manifest that they have little or no reverence of God in the most solemn duties of his worship, and less, it may be, in their secret thoughts. Some ways that have been found out to keep up a pretence and appearance of it have been and are destructive unto it.

But herein consists the very life of all religion. The fear of God is, in the Old Testament, the usual expression of all the due respect of our souls unto him, and that because where that is not in exercise, nothing is accepted with him. And hence the whole of our wisdom is said to consist therein; and if it be not in a prevalent exercise in all wherein we have to do with him immediately, all our duties are utterly lost, as to the ends of his glory and the spiritual advantage of our own souls.

CHAPTER IX.

What of God or in God we are to think and meditate upon—His being—Reasons of it; oppositions to it; the way of their conquest—Thoughts of the omnipresence and omniscience of God peculiarly necessary—The reasons hereof—As also of his omnipotence—The use and benefit of such thoughts.

THESE things mentioned have been premised in general as unto the nature, manner, and way of exercise, of our thoughts on God. That which remains is, to give some particular instances of what we are to think upon in an especial manner, and what we will be conversant withal in our thoughts, if so be we are spiritually minded. And I shall not insist at present on the things which concern his grace and love in Christ Jesus, which belong unto another head, but on those which have an immediate respect unto the divine nature itself, and its holy essential properties.

First, Think much of *the being* and *existence of God*. Herein lies the foundation of all our relation and access unto him: Heb. xi. 6, "He that cometh to God must believe that he is." This is *the first object* of faith, and it is the *first act* of reason; and being the sole foundation of all religion, it is our duty to be exercised unto multiplied thoughts about it, renewed on all occasions: for many who are not direct atheists, yet live without any solid, well-grounded

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assent unto the divine being; they do not so believe it as to be practically influenced with the consideration of it. It is granted that the inbred light of nature, in the due exercise of reason, will give any rational creature satisfaction in the being of God; but there is in the most an anticipation of any thoughts of this nature by tradition and education, which hath united men into an assent unto it they know not how. They never called it into question, nor have, as they suppose, any cause so to do. Nature itself startles at the first thought of denying it. But if ever such persons, on any urgent occasions, come to have real thoughts about it, they are at a loss and fluctuate in their minds, as not having any certain, indubitable conviction of its truth. Wherefore, as our knowledge of the Divine Being is, as to the foundation of it, laid in the light of nature, the operation of conscience, and the due exercise of reason about the works and effects of infinite power and wisdom, so it ought to be increased and rendered useful by faith in divine revelations, and the experience of divine power through them. By this faith we ought to let in frequent thoughts of the divine being and existence, and that on two reasons, rendering the duty necessary in an eminent manner in this age wherein we live:—

1. The *abounding of atheism*, both notional and practical. The reasons of it have been given before, and the matter of fact is evident unto any ordinary observation. And on two accounts with respect hereunto we ought to abound in thoughts of faith concerning the being of God:—(1.) An especial testimony is requĭred in us in opposition to this cursed effect of hell. He, therefore, who is spiritually minded, cannot but have many thoughts of the being of God, thereby giving glory to him: Isa. xliii. 9–12, "Let all the nations be gathered together, and let the people be assembled: who among them can declare this, and show us former things? let them bring forth their witnesses, that they may be justified: or let them hear, and say, It is truth. Ye are my witnesses, saith the LORD, and my servant whom I have chosen: that ye may know and believe me, and understand that I am he: before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me. I, even I, am the LORD; and beside me there is no saviour. I have declared, and have saved, and I have showed, when there was no strange god among you: therefore ye are my witnesses, saith the LORD, that I am God." Chap. xliv. 8, "Fear ye not, neither be afraid: have not I told thee from that time, and have declared it? ye are even my witnesses. Is there a God beside me? yea, there is no God; I know not any." (2.) We shall have occasion of them continually administered unto us. Those atheistical impieties, principles and practices, which abound amongst us, are grievous provocations unto all pious souls. Without frequent retreat unto

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thoughts of the being of God, there is no relief nor refreshment to be had under them. Such was the case of Noah in the old world, and of Lot in Sodom; which rendered their graces illustrious.

2. Because of *the unaccountable confusions* that all things are filled withal at this day in the world. Whatever in former times hath been a temptation in human affairs unto any of the people of God, it abounds at this day. Never had men profane and profligate greater outward appearances to strengthen them in their atheism, nor those that are godly greater trials for their faith, with respect unto the visible state of things in the world. The psalmist of old on such an occasion was almost surprised into unbelieving complaints, Ps. lxxiii. 2–5, etc.; and such surprisals may now also befall us, that we may be ready to say with him, "Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency. For all the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning." Hence, when the prophet Habakkuk was exercised with thoughts about such a state of things as is at this day in the world, which he declares, chap. i. 6–10, he lays the foundation of his consideration in the fresh exercise of faith on the being and properties of God, verses 12, 13; and David makes that his retreat on the like occasion, Ps. xi. 3–5.

In such a season as this is, upon both the accounts mentioned, those who are spiritually minded will much exercise their thoughts about the being and existence of God. They will say within themselves, "Verily there is a reward for the righteous: verily he is a God who judgeth in the earth." Hence will follow such apprehensions of the immensity of his nature, of his eternal power and infinite wisdom, of his absolute sovereignty, as will hold their souls firm and steadfast in the highest storms of temptation that may befall them.

Yet are there two things that the weaker sort of believers may be exercised with, in their thoughts of the divine being and existence, which may occasion them some trouble:—

(1.) Satan, knowing the weakness of our minds in the immediate contemplation of things infinite and incomprehensible, will sometimes take advantage to insinuate *blasphemous imaginations* in opposition unto what we would fix upon and relieve ourselves withal. He will take that very time, trusting unto our weakness and his own methods of subtlety, to suggest his temptations unto atheism by ensnaring inquiries, when we go about to refresh our souls with thoughts of the divine being and excellencies. "But is there a God indeed? how do you know that there is a God? and may it not be otherwise?" will be his language unto our minds; for from his first temptation, by way of an ensnaring question, "Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not

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eat of every tree of the garden?" he proceeds still much in the same method. So he did with our Saviour himself, "If thou be the Son of God." "Is there a God? how if there should be none?" In such a case the rule is given us by the apostle: "Above all, take the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked," Eph. vi. 16. Τοῦ πονηροῦ, "of the wicked one;" that is, the devil. And two ways will faith act itself on this occasion:—

[1.] By a *speedy rejection of such diabolical suggestions with detestation.* So did our Saviour in a case not unlike it: "Get thee behind me, Satan." Wherefore, if any such thoughts are suggested or seem to arise in your minds, know assuredly that they are no less immediately from the devil than if he personally stood before you and visibly appeared unto you. If he did so, there is none of you but would arm yourselves with an utter defiance of what he should offer unto you. It is no less necessary on this occasion, when you may feel him, though you may see him not. Suffer not his fiery darts to abide one moment with you; entertain no parley or dispute about them; reject them with indignation; and strengthen your rejection of them with some pertinent testimony of Scripture, as our Saviour did. If a man have a grenado or fire-ball cast into his clothes by his enemy, he doth not consider whether it will burn or no, but immediately shakes it off from him. Deal no otherwise with these fiery darts, lest by their abode with you they inflame your imagination unto greater disturbance.

[2.] In case they depart not utterly upon this endeavour for their exclusion and casting out, return immediately without farther dispute unto your *own experience.* When the devil hath asked you the question, if you answer him you will be ensnared; but if thereon you ask yourselves the question, and apply yourselves unto your own experience for an answer unto it, you will frustrate all his designs.

There are arguments to be taken, as was said, from the light of nature, and reason in its proper exercise, sufficient to defeat all objections of that kind; but these are not our proper weapons in case of our own temptation, which alone is now under consideration. It requires longer and more sedate reasoning than such a state will admit of; nor is it a sanctified medium for our relief.

It is what is suited unto suggestions on the occasion of our meditations that we inquire after. In them we are not to argue on such principles, but to take the shield of faith to quench these fiery darts. And if, on such occasions, Satan can divert us into long disputes about the being of God, he hath his end, by carrying us off from the meditation on him which we did design; and after a while he will

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prevail to make it a common road and trade, that no sooner shall we begin to think of God but immediately we must dispute about his being.

Therefore the way in this case, for him who is *really a believer*, is, to retreat immediately unto his own experience; which will pour shame and contempt on the suggestions of Satan. There is no believer, who hath knowledge and time to exercise the wisdom of faith in the consideration of himself and of God's dealings with him, but hath a witness in himself of his eternal power and Godhead, as also of all those other perfections of his nature which he is pleased to manifest and glorify by Jesus Christ. Wherefore, on this suggestion of Satan that there is no God, he will be able to say, "He might better tell me that I do not live nor breathe, that I am not fed by my meat nor warmed by my clothes, that I know not myself nor any thing else; for I have spiritual sense and experience of the contrary:" like him of old, who, when a cunning sophister would prove unto him by syllogisms that there was no such a thing as motion, gave no answer unto his arguments, but rose up and walked! "How often," will he say, "have I had experience of *the power and presence* of God in prayer, as though I had not only heard of him by the hearing of the ear, but also seen him by the seeing of the eye! How often hath he put forth his power and grace in me *by his Spirit and his word*, with an uncontrollable evidence of his being, goodness, love, and grace! How often hath he refreshed *my conscience* with the sense of the pardon of sin, speaking that peace unto my soul which all the world could not communicate unto me! In how many *afflictions*, dangers, troubles, hath he been a present help and relief! What sensible *emanations* of life and power from him have I obtained in meditation on his grace and glory!" As he who had been blind answered the Pharisees unto their ensnaring and captious questions, "Be it what it will, 'one thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see:'" so, "Whatever," saith such a soul, "be in this temptation of Satan, one thing I know full well, that whereas I was dead, I am alive, whereas I was blind, now I see, and that by the effect of divine power."

This shield of faith, managed in the hand of experience, will quench the fiery darts of Satan, and he will fall under a double defeat:—1*st*. His temptations will be repelled by the proper way of resistance, whereon he will not only desist in his attempt, but even flee from you. "Resist the devil," saith the apostle, "and he will flee from you." He will not only depart and cease to trouble you, but will depart as one defeated and confounded. And it is for want of this resistance, lively made use of, that many hang so long in the briers of this temptation. 2*dly*. Recalling the experiences we

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have had of God will lead us unto the exercise of all kind of graces; which is the greatest disappointment of our adversary.

(2.) In thoughts of the divine being and existence, we are apt to be at a loss, to be as it were *overwhelmed* in our minds, because the object is too great and glorious for us to contemplate on. Eternity and immensity, every thing under the notion of infinite, take off the mind from its distinct actings, and reduce it as it were unto nothing. Hereon in some, not able to abide in the strict reasons of things, vain and foolish imaginations are apt to arise, and inquiries how those things can be which we cannot comprehend. Others are utterly at a loss, and turn away their thoughts from them, as they would do their eyes from the bright beams of the sun. Two things are advisable in this case:—

[1.] That we betake ourselves unto a *holy admiration* of what we *cannot comprehend*. In these things we cannot see God and live; nay, in life eternal itself they are not absolutely to be comprehended. Only what is infinite can fully comprehend what is so. Here they are the objects of faith and worship; in them we may find rest and satisfaction when inquiries and reasonings will disquiet us, and, it may be, overwhelm us. Infinite glory forbids us any near approach but only by faith. The soul thereby bowing down itself unto God's adorable greatness and incomprehensible perfections, finding ourselves to be nothing and God to be all, will give us rest and peace in these things, Rom. xi. 33–36. We have but unsteady thoughts of the greatness of the world and all the nations and inhabitants of it; yet are both it and these "but as the small dust of the balance and the drop of a bucket, as vanity, as nothing," compared with God. What, then, can our thoughts concerning him issue in but holy admiration?

[2.] In case we are brought unto a loss and disorder in our minds on the contemplation of any one infinite property of God, it is good to divert our thoughts unto *the effects of it*, such as whereof we have or may have experience; for what is too great or high for us in itself is made suitable to our understandings in its effects. So the "invisible things of God" are known in and by the things that are seen. And there is, indeed, no property of the divine nature but we may have an experience of it, as unto some of its effects, in and upon ourselves. These we may consider, and in the streams taste of the fountain which we cannot approach. By them we may be led unto a holy admiration of what is in itself infinite, immense, incomprehensible. I cannot comprehend the immensity of God's nature; it may be I cannot understand the nature of immensity: yet if I find by experience, and do strongly believe, that he is always present wherever I am, I have the faith of it and satisfaction in it.

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Secondly, With thoughts of the Divine Being, those of *his omnipresence and omniscience* ought continually to accompany us. We cannot take one step in a walk before him unless we remember that always and in all places he is present with us, that the frame of our hearts and our inward thoughts are continually in his view, no less than our outward actions. And as we ought to be perpetually under an awe of and in the fear of God in these apprehensions, so there are some seasons wherein our minds ought to be in the actual conception and thoughts of them, without which we shall not be preserved in our duty.

1. The first season of this nature is when times, places, with other occasions of *temptation*, and consequently of *sinning*, do come and meet. With some, company doth constitute such a season; and with some, secrecy with opportunity do the same. There are those who are ready, with a careless boldness, to put themselves on such societies as they do know have been temptations unto them and occasions of sin. Every such entrance into any society or company, unto them who know how it hath formerly succeeded, is their actual sin; and it is just with God to leave them to all the evil consequents that do ensue. Others, also, do either choose or are frequently cast on such societies; and no sooner are they engaged in them but they forget all regard unto God, and give themselves up not only unto vanity, but unto various sorts of excess. David knew the evil and danger of such occasions, and gives us an account of his behaviour in them: Ps. xxxix. 1–3, "I said, I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue: I will keep my mouth with a bridle, while the wicked is before me. I was dumb with silence, I held my peace, even from good; and my sorrow was stirred. My heart was hot within me, while I was musing the fire burned; then spake I with my tongue." As for their evil words and ways, he would have no communication with them; and as unto good discourse, he judged it unreasonable to "cast pearls before swine." He was therefore silent as unto that also, though it was a grief and trouble to him. But this occasioned in him afterward those excellent meditations which he expresseth in the following verses. In the entrance of these occasions, if men would remember the presence of God with them in these places, with the holy severity of the eye that is upon them, it would put an awe upon their spirits, and imbitter those jollities whose relish is given them by temptation and sin. He doth neither walk humbly nor circumspectly who, being necessarily cast on the society of men wicked or profane,—on such occasions wherein the ordinary sort of men give more than ordinary liberty unto corrupt communication or excess in any kind,—doth not in his entrance of them call to mind the presence and all-seeing eye of God,

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and at his departure from them consider whether his deportment hath been such as became that presence and his being under that eye. But, alas! pretences of business and necessary occasions, engagements of trade, carnal relations, and the common course of communication in the world, with a supposition that all sorts of society are allowed for diversion, have cast out the remembrance of God from the minds of most, even then when men cannot be preserved from sin without it.

This hath sullied the beauty of gospel conversation amongst the most, and left in very few any prevalent evidence of being spiritually minded.

Wherefore, as unto them who, either by their voluntary choice or necessity of their occasions, do enter and engage promiscuously into all societies and companies, let them know assuredly that if they awe not their hearts and spirits continually with the thoughts and apprehensions of the omnipresence and omniscience of God, that he is always with them and his eye always upon them, they will not be preserved from snares and sinful miscarriages.

Yea, such thoughts are needful unto the best of us all, and in the best of our societies, that we behave not ourselves indecently in them at any time.

Again; unto some, privacy, secrecy, and opportunity, are occasions of temptation and sin. They are so unto persons under convictions, not wholly turned to God. Many a good beginning hath been utterly ruined by this occasion and temptation. Privacy and opportunity have overthrown many such persons in the best of their resolutions. And they are so unto all persons not yet flagitiously wicked. Cursed fruits proceed every day from these occasions. We need no other demonstration of their power and efficacy in tempting unto sin but the visible effects of them. And what they are unto any, they may be unto all, if not diligently watched against. So the apostle reflects on the shameful things that are done in the dark, in a concurrence of secrecy and opportunity. This, therefore, gives a just season unto thoughts of the omnipresence and omniscience of God, and they will not be wanting in some measure in them that are spiritually minded.

God is in this place; the darkness is no darkness unto him, light and darkness are with him both alike,—are sufficient considerations to lay in the balance against any temptation springing out of secrecy and opportunity. One thought of the actual presence of the holy God and the open view of his all-seeing eye will do more to cool those affections which lust may put into a tumult on such occasions than any other consideration whatever. A speedy retreat hereunto, upon the first perplexing thought wherewith temptation assaults the soul, will be its strong tower, where it shall be safe.

2. A second season calling for the exercise of our minds in thoughts

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of the omnipresence and omniscience of God is made up of *our solitudes and retirements.* These give us the most genuine trials whether we are spiritually minded or no. What we are in them, that we are, and no more. But yet in some of them, as in walking and journeying, or the like, vain thoughts and foolish imaginations are exceeding apt to solicit our minds. Whatever is stored up in the affections or memory will at such a time offer itself for our present entertainment; and when men have accustomed themselves unto any sort of things, they will press on them for the possession of their thoughts, as it were whether they will or no. The psalmist gives us the way to prevent this evil: Ps. xvi. 7, 8, "I will bless the LORD, who hath given me counsel: my reins also instruct me in the night seasons. I have set the LORD always before me: because he is at my right hand," etc. His "reins,"—that is, his affections and secret thoughts,—gave him counsel and instructed him in all such seasons. But whence had they that wisdom and faithfulness? In themselves they are the seat of all lusts and corruptions, nor could do any thing but seduce him into an evil frame. It was from hence alone, that "he set the LORD always before him." Continual apprehensions of the presence of God with him kept his mind, his heart and affections, in that awe and reverence of him as that they always instructed him unto his duty. But, as I remember, I spake somewhat as unto the due management of our thoughts in this season before.

3. Times of *great difficulties, dangers, and perplexities of mind* thereon, are a season calling for the same duty. Suppose a man is left alone in his trials for the profession of the gospel, as it was with Paul, when "all men forsook him, and no man stood by him;" suppose him to be brought before princes, rulers, or judges, that are filled with rage and armed with power against him, all things being disposed to affect him with dread and terror;—it is the duty of such an one to call off his thoughts from all things visibly present, and to fix them on the omnipresence and omniscience of God. He sits amongst those judges, though they acknowledge him not; he rules over them at his pleasure; he knows the cause of the oppressed, and justifies them whenever the world condemns, and can deliver them when he pleaseth. With the thoughts hereof did those holy souls support themselves when they stood before the fiery countenance of the bloody tyrant on the one hand, and the burning fiery furnace on the other: Dan. iii. 17, 18, "Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up." Thoughts of the presence and power of God gave them not only comfort and supportment under their distress, when

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they were alone and helpless, but courage and resolution to defy the tyrant to his face. And when the apostle was brought before Nero, that monster of cruelty and villany, and "all men forsook him," he affirms that "the Lord stood by him and strengthened him," 2 Tim. iv. 17. He refreshed himself with thoughts of his presence, and had the blessed fruit of it.

Wherefore, on such occasions, when the hearts of men are ready to quake, when they see all things about them filled with dread and terror, and all help far away, it is, I say, their duty and wisdom to abstract and take off their thoughts from all outward and present appearances, and to fix them on the presence of God. This will greatly change the scene of things in their minds, and they will find that strength, and power, and wisdom, are on their side alone, all that appears against them being but vanity, folly, and weakness.

So when the servant of Elisha saw the place where they were compassed with a host, both horses and chariots, that came to take them, he cried out for fear, "Alas, my master! how shall we do?" But upon the prayer of the prophet, the Lord opening the eyes of the young man to see the heavenly guard that he had sent unto him, the mountain being full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha, his fear and trouble departed, 2 Kings vi. 15–17. And when, in the like extremity, God opens the eye of faith to behold his glorious presence, we shall no more be afraid of the dread of men. Herein did the holy martyrs triumph of old, and even despised their bloody persecutors. Our Saviour himself made it the ground of his supportment on the like occasion: John xvi. 32, "Behold," saith he to his disciples, his only friends, "the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered, every one to his own, and shall leave me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me." Can we but possess our souls with the apprehension that when we are left alone, in our trials and dangers, from any countenance of friends or help of men, yet that indeed we are not alone, because the Father is with us, it will support us under our despondencies, and enable us unto our duties.

4. *Especial providential warnings* call for thoughts of God's omnipresence and omniscience. So Jacob in his night vision instantly made this conclusion, "God is in this place, and I knew it not." We have frequently such warnings given unto us. Sometimes we have so in the things which are esteemed accidental, whence, it may be, we are strangely delivered; sometimes we have so in the things which we see to befall others, by thunder, lightning, storms at sea or land: for all the works of God, especially those that are rare and strange, have a voice whereby he speaks unto us. The first thing suggested unto a spiritual mind in such seasons will

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be, "God is in this place,"—"He is present that liveth and seeth," as Hagar confessed on the like occasion, Gen. xvi. 13, 14.

Thirdly, Have frequent thoughts of *God's omnipotency*, or his almighty power. This most men, it may be, suppose they need not much exhortation unto; for none ever doubted of it. Who doth not grant it on all occasions? Men grant it, indeed, in general; for eternal power is inseparable from the first notion of the Divine Being. So are they conjoined by the apostle: "His eternal power and Godhead," Rom. i. 20. Yet few believe it for themselves and as they ought. Indeed, to believe the almighty power of God with reference unto ourselves and all our concernments, temporal and eternal, is one of the highest and most noble acts of faith, which includes all others in it: for this is that which God at first proposed alone as the proper object of our faith in our entrance into covenant with him, Gen. xvii. 1, "I am the Almighty God;" that which Job arrived unto after his long exercise and trial. "I know," saith he, "that thou canst do every thing, and no thought of thine can be hindered," chap. xlii. 2. "God hath spoken once," saith the psalmist; "twice have I heard this; that power belongeth unto God," Ps. lxii. 11. It was that which God saw it necessary frequently to instruct him in; for we are ready to be affected with the appearances of *present power* in creatures, and to suppose that all things will go according unto their wills because of their power. But it is quite otherwise; all creatures are poor feeble ciphers, that can do nothing. Power belongs unto God; it is a flower of his crown imperial, which he will suffer none to usurp. If the proudest of them go beyond the bounds and limits of his present permission, he will send worms to eat them up, as he did to Herod.

It is utterly impossible we should walk before God, unto his glory, or with any real peace, comfort, or satisfaction in our own souls, unless our minds are continually exercised with thoughts of his almighty power. Every thing that befalls us, every thing that we hear of which hath the least of danger in it, will discompose our minds, and either make us tremble like the leaves of the forest that are shaken with the wind, or betake ourselves to foolish or sinful relief, unless we are firmly established in the faith hereof. Consider the promises of God unto the church which are upon record, and as yet unaccomplished; consider the present state of the church in the world, with all that belongs unto it, in all the fears and dangers they are exposed unto, in all the evils they are exercised withal,—and we shall quickly find that unless this sheet-anchor be well fixed, we shall be tossed up and down at all uncertainties, and exposed to most violent temptations, Rev. xix. 6. Unto this end are we called hereunto by God himself in his answer unto the despondent com-

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plaints of the church in its greatest dangers and calamities: Isa. xl. 28–31, "Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding. He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: but they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint."

Take one instance, which is the continual concernment of us all. We are obnoxious unto death every moment. It is never the farther from any of us because we think not of it as we ought. This will lay our bodies in the dust, from whence they will have no more disposition nor power in themselves to rise again than any other part of the mould of the earth. Their recovery must be an act of *external almighty power*, when God shall have a desire to the work of his hands, when he shall call, and we shall answer him out of the dust. And it will transmit the soul into an invisible world, putting a final end unto all relations, enjoyments, and circumstances here below. I speak not of them who are stout-hearted and far from righteousness, who live and die like beasts, or under the power of horrible presumption, without any due thoughts of their future and eternal state; but as unto others, what comfort or satisfaction can any man have in his life, whereon his all depends, and which is passing from him every moment, unless he hath continual thoughts of the mighty power of God, whereby he is able to receive his departing soul and to raise his body out of the dust?

Not to insist on more particulars, thus is it with them who are spiritually minded; thus must it be with us all if we pretend a title unto that privilege: They are filled with thoughts of God, in opposition unto that character of wicked men, that "God is not in all their thoughts." And it is greatly to be feared that many of us, when we come to be weighed in this balance, will be found too light. Men may be in the performance of outward duties; they may hear the word with delight, and do many things gladly; they may escape the pollutions that are in the world through lust, and not run out into the same compass of excess and riot with other men: yet may they be strangers unto inward thoughts of God with delight and complacency. I cannot understand how it can be otherwise with them whose minds are over and over filled with earthly things, however they may satisfy themselves with pretences of their callings and lawful enjoyments, or that they are not any way inordinately set on the pleasures or profits of the world.

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To "walk with God," to "live unto him," is not merely to be found in an abstinence from outward sins, and in the performance of outward duties, though with diligence in the multiplication of them. All this may be done upon such principles, for such ends, with such a frame of heart, as to find no acceptance with God. It is our hearts that he requireth, and we can no way give them unto him but by our affections and holy thoughts of him with delight. This it is to be spiritually minded, this it is to walk with God. Let no man deceive himself; unless he thus abound in holy thoughts of God, unless our meditation of him be sweet unto us, all that we else pretend unto will fail us in the day of our trial.

This is the first thing wherein we may evidence ourselves unto ourselves to be under the conduct of the minding of the Spirit, or to be spiritually minded; and I have insisted the longer on it, because it contains the first sensible egress of the Spirit of living waters in us, the first acting of spiritual life unto our own experience. I should now proceed unto the consideration of our affections, of whose frame and state these thoughts are the only genuine exposition; but whereas there are, or may be, some who are sensible of their own weakness and deficiency in the discharge of that part of this duty in being spiritually minded which we have passed through, and may fall under discouragements thereon, we must follow Him, as we are able, who "will not quench the smoking flax, nor break the bruised reed," by offering something unto the relief of them that are sincere under the sense of their own weakness.

CHAPTER X.

Sundry things tendered unto such as complain that, they know not how, they are not able to abide in holy thoughts of God and spiritual or heavenly things, for their relief, instruction, and direction—Rules concerning stated spiritual meditation.

SOME will say, yea, on many occasions do say, that there is not any thing in all their duty towards God wherein they are more at a loss than they are in this one, of *fixing or exercising their thoughts or meditations on things heavenly or spiritual.* They acknowledge it a duty; they see an excellency in it, with inexpressible usefulness: but although they often try and attempt it, they cannot attain unto any thing but what makes them ashamed both of it and themselves. Their minds, they find, are unsteady, apt to rove and wander, or give entertainment unto other things, and not to abide on the object

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which they design their meditation towards. Their abilities are small, their invention barren, their memories frail, and their judgments, to dispose of things into right order, weak and unable. They know not what to think on, for the most part; and when they fix on any thing, they are immediately at a loss as unto any progress, and so give over. Hence other thoughts, or thoughts of other things, take advantage to impose themselves on them, and what began in spiritual meditation ends in carnal vanity. On these considerations ofttimes they are discouraged to enter on the duty, ofttimes give it over so soon as it is begun, and are glad if they come off without being losers by their endeavours, which often befalls them. With respect unto other duties it is not so with them. Unto such as are really concerned in these things, unto whom their want and defect is a burden, who mourn under it, and desire to be freed from it or refreshed in their conflict with it, I shall offer the things that ensue:—

First, That *sense of the vanity of our minds which this consideration duly attended unto will give us, ought greatly to humble and abase our souls.* Whence is it thus with us, that we cannot abide in thoughts and meditations of things spiritual and heavenly? Is it because they are such things as we have no great concernment in? It may be they are things worthless and unprofitable, so that it is to no purpose to spend our thoughts about them. The truth is, they alone are worthy, useful, and desirable; all other things in comparison of them are but "loss and dung." Or is it because the faculties and powers of our souls were not originally suited unto the contemplation of them and delight in them? This also is otherwise; they were all given unto us, all created of God for this end, all fitted with inclinations and power to abide with God in all things, without aversation or weariness. Nothing was so natural, easy, and pleasant unto them, as steadiness in the contemplation of God and his works. The cause, therefore, of all this evil lies at our own door. All this, therefore, and all other evils, came upon us by the entrance of sin. And therefore Solomon, in his inquiry after all the causes and effects of vanity, brings it under this head, "Lo, this only have I found, that God made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions," Eccles. vii. 29: for hereby our minds, that were created in a state of blessed adherence unto God, were wholly turned off from him, and not only so, but filled with enmity against him. In this state, that vanity which is prevalent in them is both their sin and their punishment: their *sin*, in a perpetual inclination unto things vain, foolish, sensual, and wicked,—so the apostle describes it at large, Eph. iv. 17–19, Tit. iii. 3; and their *punishment*, in that, being turned off from the chiefest good, wherein alone rest is to be

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found, they are filled with darkness, confusion, and disquietment, being "like the troubled sea that cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt."

By grace our minds are renewed,—that is, changed and delivered from this frame; but they are so partially only. The principle of vanity is no longer predominant in us, to alienate us from the life of God, or to keep us in enmity against him. Those who are so renewed do not "walk in the vanity of their minds," as others do, Eph. iv. 17. They go up and down, in all their ways and occasions, with a stream of vain thoughts in their minds. But the remainders of it are *effectually operative* in us, in all the actings of our minds towards God, affecting them with uncertainty and instability: as he who hath received a great wound in any principal part of his body, though it may be so cured as that death shall not immediately ensue thereon, yet it may make him go weak and lame all his days, and hinder him in the exercise of all the powers of life. The vanity of our minds is so cured as to deliver us from spiritual death; but yet such a wound, such a weakness doth remain, as both weakens and hinders us in all the operations of spiritual life. Hence those who have made any progress in grace are sensible of their vanity as the greatest burden of their souls, and do groan after such a complete renovation of their minds as whereby they may be perfectly freed from it. This is that which they principally regard in that complaining desire, Rom. vii. 24, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from this body of death?" Yea, they groan under a sense of it every day, nor is any thing such a trouble unto them, observing how it defeats them in their designs to contemplate on heavenly things, how it frustrates their best resolutions to abide in the spiritual actings of faith and love, how they are imposed on by it with thoughts of things which, either in themselves or in their consequences, they most abhor. Nothing are they so afraid of, nothing is so grievous and burdensome unto them, nothing do they more groan for deliverance from. When there is war in any place, it behoveth them that are concerned to have an eye and regard unto all their enemies and their attempts against them; but if they are vigilant and diligent in their opposition unto those that are without that visibly contend with them, and in the meantime neglect such as traitorously act within among themselves, betraying their counsels and weakening their strength, they will be undoubtedly ruined. Wise men do first take care of what is within, as knowing if they are there betrayed, all they do against their open enemies is to no purpose. In the warfare wherein we are engaged, we have enemies of all sorts that openly and visibly, in various temptations, fight against our souls. These it is our duty to

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watch against, to conflict with, and to seek a conquest over. But it is this internal vanity of mind that endeavours in all things to betray us, to weaken us in all our graces, or to hinder their due operation, and to open the doors of our hearts unto our cursed enemies. If our principal endeavour be not to discover, suppress, and destroy this traitor, we shall not succeed in our spiritual warfare.

This, therefore, being the *original cause* of all that disability of mind, as unto steadiness in holy thoughts and meditations, whereof you do complain, when you are affected therewith turn unto the consideration of that from whence it doth proceed. Labour to be humbled greatly, and to walk humbly, under a sense of the remainders of this vanity of mind. So some wholesome fruit may be taken from this bitter root, and meat may come out of this eater. If, when you cannot abide in holy thoughts of God and your relation unto him, you reflect on this cause of it, to your farther humiliation and self-abasement, your good design and purpose are not lost. Let such an one say, "I began to think of God, of his love and grace in Christ Jesus, of my duty towards him; and where now, in a few minutes, do I find myself? I am got unto the ends of the earth, into things useless and earthly, or am at such a loss as that I have no mind to proceed in the work wherein I was engaged. 'O wretched man that I am!' what a cursed enemy have I within me! I am ashamed of myself, weary of myself, I loathe myself. 'Who shall deliver me from this body of death?'" Such thoughts may be as useful unto him as those which he first designed.

True it is, we can never be freed *absolutely* from all the effects of this vanity and instability of mind in this world. Unchangeable cleaving unto God always, in all the powers and affections of our minds, is reserved for heaven. But yet great degrees may be attained in the conquest and expulsion of it, such as I fear few have experience of, yet ought all to labour after. If we apply ourselves as we ought to the increase of spiritual light and grace; if we labour diligently to abide and abound in thoughts of spiritual things, and that in love to them and delight in them; if we watch against the entertainment and approbation of such thoughts and things in our minds as whereby this vain frame is pleased and confirmed,—there is, though not an absolute perfection, yet a blessed degree of heavenly mindedness to be attained, and therein the nearest approach unto glory that in this world we are capable of. If a man cannot attain an athletic constitution of health, or a strength like that of Samson, yet, if he be wise, he will not omit the use of such means as may make him to be useful in the ordinary duties of life; and although we cannot attain perfection in this matter,—which yet is our duty to be continually pressing after,—yet, if we are wise, we will be endeavouring such

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a cure of this spiritual distemper as that we may be able to discharge all the duties of the life of God. But if men in all other things feed the vanity of their own minds; if they permit them to rove continually after things foolish, sensual, and earthly; if they wilfully supply them with objects unto that end, and labour not by all means for the mortification of this evil frame,—in vain shall they desire or expect to bring them at any time, on any occasion, to be steady in the thoughts of heavenly things. If it be thus with any, as it is to be feared it is with many, it is their duty to mind the words of our Lord Jesus Christ in the first place, "Make the tree good, and the fruit will be good," and not before. When the power of sanctifying grace hath made the mind habitually spiritual and heavenly, thoughts of such things will be natural unto it, and accompanied with delight; but they will not be so until the God of peace have sanctified us in our whole spirits, souls, and bodies, whereby we may be preserved blameless unto the coming of Jesus Christ.

Secondly, Be always sensible of your own insufficiency to raise in your minds or to manage spiritual thoughts, or thoughts of things spiritual and heavenly, in a due manner. But in this case men are apt to suppose that as they may so they can think of what they please. Thoughts are their own, and therefore, be they of what sort they will, they need no assistance for them. They cannot think as they ought, they can do nothing at all; and nothing will convince them of their folly until they are burdened with an experience of the contrary, as unto spiritual things. But the advice given is expressly laid down by the apostle, in the instance of himself: 2 Cor. iii. 5, "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God." He speaks principally of ministers of the gospel, and that of such as were most eminently furnished with spiritual gifts and graces, as he declares, verse 6. And if it be so with them, and that with respect unto the work and duties of their calling, how much more is it so with others who have not their graces nor their office! Wherefore if men, without regard unto the present actual grace of God and the supplies of his Spirit, do suppose that they can of themselves exercise their minds in spiritual thoughts, and so only fret at themselves when they fall into disappointment, not knowing what is the matter with them, they will live in a lifeless, barren frame all their days.

By the strength of their *natural abilities*, men may frame thoughts of God and heavenly things in their minds, according unto the knowledge they have of them. They may methodize them by rules of art, and express them elegantly unto others. But even while they do so, they may be far enough from being spiritually minded; for there may be in their thoughts no actings of faith, love, or holy de-

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light in God, or any grace at all. But such alone are the things which we inquire after; they are such only as wherein the graces of the Spirit are in their proper exercise. With respect unto them we have no sufficiency in ourselves; all our sufficiency must be of God. There is no truth, among persons of light and knowledge, more generally granted in the notion of it than this, that of ourselves we can do nothing, and none more neglected in daily practice. Men profess they can do nothing of themselves, and yet go about their duties as if they could do all things.

Thirdly, Remember that I have not at present treated of *solemn stated meditation*, concerning which other rules and instructions ought to be given. By solemn or stated meditation, I intend the thoughts of some subject spiritual and divine, with the fixing, forcing, and ordering of our thoughts about it, with a design to affect our own hearts and souls with the matter of it, or the things contained in it. By this design it is distinguished from the study of the word, wherein our principal aim is to learn the truth, or to declare it unto others; and so also from prayer, whereof God himself is the immediate object. But in meditation it is the affecting of our own hearts and minds with love, delight, and humiliation. At present I have only showed what it is to be spiritually minded, and that in this instance of our thoughts as they proceed from the habitual frame of our hearts and affections, or of what sort the constant course of our thoughts ought to be with respect unto all the occasions of the life of God. This persons may be in a readiness for who are yet unskilful in and unable for stated meditation; for there is required thereunto such an exercise of our natural faculties and abilities as some, through their weakness and ignorance, are incapable of. But as unto what we have hitherto insisted on, it is not unattainable by any in whom is the Spirit of faith and love; for it is but the frequent actings of them that I intend. Wherefore, do your hearts and affections lead you unto many thoughts of God and spiritual things? do they spring up in you as water in a well of living waters? are you ready on all occasions to entertain such thoughts, and to be conversant with them as opportunity doth offer itself? do you labour to have in a readiness what is useful for you with respect unto temptations and duties? is God in Christ, and the things of the gospel, the ordinary retreat of your souls?—though you should not be able to carry on an orderly, stated meditation in your minds, yet you may be spiritually minded.

A man may not have a capacity and ability to carry on a great trade of merchandise in the world,—the knowledge of all sorts of commodities and seasons of the world and nations of it, with those contrivances and accounts which belong unto such trade, may be

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above his comprehension, and he may quickly ruin himself in undertaking such an employment,—yet may the abilities of this man serve him well enough to carry on a retail trade in a private shop, wherein perhaps he may thrive as well and get as good an estate as any of those whose greater capacities lead them forth unto more large and hazardous employments. So it may be with some in this case. The natural faculties of their minds are not sufficient to enable them unto *stated meditation;* they cannot cast things into that method and order which is required thereunto, nor frame the conceptions of their minds into words significant and expressive: yet as unto *frequency of thoughts of God,* and a disposition of mind thereunto, they may thrive and be skilful beyond most others of greater natural abilities. Howbeit, because even stated meditation is a necessary duty, yea, the principal way whereby our spiritual thoughts do profitably act themselves, I shall have regard thereunto in the following direction. Wherefore,—

Fourthly, *Whatever principle of grace we have in our minds, we cannot attain unto a ready exercise of it, in a way of spiritual meditation, or otherwise, without great diligence, nor without great difficulty.*

It was showed at the entrance of this discourse that there is a difference in this grace, between the essence, substance, or reality of it, which we would not exclude men from under many failings or infirmities, and the useful degrees of it, wherein it hath its principal exercise; as there is a difference in life natural and its actings in a weak, diseased, sickly body, and in that which is of a good constitution and in a vigorous health. Supposing the first, the reality of this grace, be wrought in us or implanted in our minds by the Holy Ghost, as a principal part of that new nature which is the workmanship of God, created in Christ Jesus unto good works; yet unto the growth and improvement of it, as of all other graces, our own diligent care, watchfulness, and spiritual striving in all holy duties, are required. Unless the most fruitful ground be manured, it will not bring forth a useful crop. Let not any think that this frame of a spiritual mind, wherein there is a disposition unto and a readiness for all holy thoughts of God, of Christ, of spiritual and heavenly things, at all times and on all occasions, will befall him and continue with him he knows not how. As good it is for a poor man to expect to be rich in this world without industry, or for a weak man to be strong and healthy without food and exercise, as to be spiritually minded without an earnest endeavour after it. It may be inquired what is requisite thereunto; and we may name some of those things without which such a holy frame will not be attained: as,—

1. A *continual watch is to be kept in and on the soul* against the

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incursions of vain thoughts and imaginations, especially in such seasons wherein they are apt to obtain advantage. If they are suffered to make an inroad into the mind, if we accustom ourselves to give them entertainment, if they are wont to lodge within, in vain shall we hope or desire to be spiritually minded. Herein consists a principal part of that duty which our Saviour so frequently, so emphatically chargeth on us all, namely, to "watch," Mark xiii. 37. Unless we keep a strict watch herein, we shall be betrayed into the hands of our spiritual enemies; for all such thoughts are but making provision for the flesh, to fulfil its desires in the lusts thereof, however they may be disappointed as unto actual sin. This is the substance of the advice given us in charge, Prov. iv. 23, "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life."

2. Careful *avoidance of all societies and businesses of this life* which are apt, under various pretences, to draw and seduce the mind unto an earthly or sensual frame. If men will venture on those things which they have found by experience, or may find by their observation, that they seduce and draw off their minds from a heavenly frame unto that which is contrary thereunto, and will not watch unto their avoidance, they will be filled with the fruit of their own ways. Indeed, the common converse of professors among themselves and others, walking, talking, and behaving themselves like other men, being as full of the world as the world is of itself, hath lost the grace of being spiritually minded within, and stained the glory of profession without. The rule observed by David will manifest how careful we ought to be herein: Ps. xxxix. 1–3, "I said, I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue: I will keep my mouth with a bridle, while the wicked is before me. I was dumb with silence, I held my peace, even from good; and my sorrow was stirred. My heart was hot within me, while I was musing the fire burned: then spake I with my tongue;"—which place was spoken unto before.

3. A *holy constraint* put on the mind to abide in the duty of spiritual thoughts and meditations, pressing it continually with the consideration of their necessity and usefulness. The mind will be apt of itself to start aside from duties purely spiritual, through the mixture of the flesh abiding in it. The more inward and purely spiritual any duty is which hath no outward advantages, the more prone will the mind be to decline from it. It will be so more from *private prayer* than *public*, more from *meditation* than *prayer*. And other things will be apt to draw it aside, by objects without, and various stirrings of the affections within. A holy constraint is to be put upon it, with a sudden rejection of what rises up to its diversion or disturbance. Wherefore, we are to call in all constraining

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motives, such as the consideration of the love of Christ, 2 Cor. v. 14, to keep the mind steady unto its duty.

4. *Diligent use of means* to furnish the soul with that light and knowledge of heavenly things which may administer continual matter of holy thoughts and meditations from within ourselves. This hath been spoken unto at large before. And the want hereof is that which keeps many from the least proficiency in these duties: as a man may have some skill or ability for a trade, yet if he have no materials to work upon, he must sit still, and let his trade alone. And so must men do as unto the work of holy meditation. Whatever be the ability of the natural faculties, their inventions or memories, if they are not furnished with knowledge of things spiritual and heavenly, which are the subject-matter of such meditations, they must let their work alone. Hence the apostle prays for the Colossians, that "the word of Christ might dwell in them richly in all wisdom," chap. iii. 16; that is, that they might abound in the knowledge of the mind of Christ, without which we shall be unfit for this duty.

5. *Unweariedness in our conflict with Satan*, who, by various artifices and the injection of fiery darts, labours continually to divert us from these duties. He is seldom or never wanting unto this occasion. He who is furnished in any measure with spiritual wisdom and understanding may find him more sensibly at work in his craft and opposition with respect unto this duty than any other way. When we stand thus before the Lord, he is always at our right hand to resist us, and ofttimes his strength is great. Hence, as was observed, ofttimes men design really to exercise themselves in holy thoughts, but end in vain imaginations, and rather take up with trifles than continue in this duty. Steadiness in the resistance of him on these occasions is one great part of our spiritual warfare. And we may know that he is at work by his engines and methods; for they consist in his suggestions of vain, foolish, or corrupt imaginations. When they begin to rise in our minds at such times as we would engage them in spiritual meditation, we may know assuredly from whence they are.

6. *Continual watchful care that no root of bitterness spring up and defile us, that no lust or corruption be predominant in us.* When it is so, if persons, in compliance with their convictions, do endeavour sometimes to be exercised in these duties, they shall labour in the very fire, where all their endeavours will be immediately consumed.

7. *Mortification unto the world in our affections and desires, with moderation in our endeavours after the needful things of it*, are also necessary hereunto, yea, to that degree that without them no man can in any sense be said to be spiritually minded; for other-

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wise our affections cannot be so preserved under the power of grace as that spiritual things may be always savoury unto us.

Some, it may be, will say, that if all these things are required thereunto, it will take up a man's whole life and time to be spiritually minded. They hope they may attain it at an easier rate, and not forego all other advantages and sweetnesses of life, which a strict observation of these things would cast them upon.

I answer, that however it may prove a hard saying unto some, yet I must say it, and my heart would reproach me if I should not say, that if the principal part of our time be not spent about these things, whatever we suppose, we have indeed neither life nor peace. The first-fruits of all were to be offered unto God; and in sacrifices he required the blood and the fat of the inwards. If the best be not his, he will have nothing. It is so as to our time. Tell me, I pray you, how you can spend your time and your lives better, or to better purpose, and I shall say, Go on and prosper. I am sure some spend so much of their time so much worse as it is a shame to see it. Do you think you came into this world to spend your whole time and strength in your employments, your trades, your pleasures, unto the satisfaction of the "wills of the flesh and of the mind?" Have you time enough to eat, to drink, to sleep, to talk unprofitably, it may be corruptly, in all sorts of unnecessary societies, but have not enough to live unto God in the very essentials of that life which consists in these things? Alas! you came into the world under this law, "It is appointed to men once to die, and after this the judgment," Heb. ix. 27; and the end why your life is here granted unto you is that you may be prepared for that judgment. If this be neglected, if the principal part of your time be not improved with respect unto this end, you will fall under the sentence of it unto eternity.

But men are apt to mistake in this matter. They may think that these things tend to take them off from their *lawful employments and recreations*, which they are generally afraid of, and unwilling to purchase any frame of mind at so dear a rate. They may suppose that to have men spiritually minded, we would make them mopes, and to disregard all the lawful occasions of life. But let not any be mistaken; I am not upon a design that will be easily, or, it may be, honestly defeated. Men are able to defend themselves in their callings and enjoyments, and to satisfy their consciences against any persuasions to the contrary: yet there is a season wherein we are obliged to part with all we have, and to give up ourselves wholly to follow Christ in all things, Matt. xix. 21; and if we neglect or refuse it in that season, it is an evidence that we are hypocrites. And there was a time when superstition had so much power on the minds of men, that multitudes were persuaded to forsake, to give up, all their

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interest in relations, callings, goods, possessions, and betake themselves unto tedious pilgrimages, yea, hard services in war, to comply with that superstition; and it is not to the glory of our profession that we have so few instances of men parting with all, and giving up themselves unto heavenly retirement. But I am at present on no such design; I aim not to take men out of their lawful earthly occasions, but to bring spiritual affections and thoughts into the management of them all. The things mentioned will deprive you of no time you can lay a claim unto, but sanctify it all.

I confess he must be a great *proficient in spirituality* who dares venture on an *absolute retirement*, and he must be well satisfied that he is not called unto a usefulness among men inconsistent therewith: unto them it may prove a disadvantage. Yet this also is attainable, if other circumstances do concur. Men under the due exercise of grace and the improvement of it may attain unto that *fixedness in heavenly mindedness*, that unconcernment in all things here below, as to give themselves up entirely and continually unto heavenly meditation, unto a blessed advancement of all grace, and a near approach unto glory. And I would hope it was so with many of them in ancient times who renounced the world, with all circumstances of relations, state, inheritances, and betook themselves unto retirement in wildernesses, to abide always in divine contemplation. But afterward, when multitudes, whose minds were not so prepared by a real growth in all grace and mortification unto the world as they were, betook themselves under the same pretences unto a monastical retirement, the devil, the world, sensual lusts, superstition, and all manner of evils, pursued them, found them out, possessed them, unto the unspeakable damage and scandal of religion.

This, therefore, is not that which I invite the common sort of believers unto. Let them that are able and free receive it. The generality of Christians have lawful callings, employments, and businesses, which ordinarily they ought to abide in. That they also may live unto God in their occasions, they may do well to consider two things:—

(1.) Industry in men's callings is a thing in itself very commendable. If in nothing else, it hath an advantage herein, that it is a means to preserve men from those excesses in lust and riot which otherwise they are apt to run into. And if you consider the two sorts of men whereinto the generality of mankind are distributed,—namely, of them who are industrious in their affairs, and those who spend their time, so far as they are able, in idleness and pleasure,—the former sort are far more amiable and desirable. Howbeit it is capable of being greatly abused. Earthly mindedness, covetousness, devouring things holy as to times and seasons of duty, useless-

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ness, and the like pernicious vices, do invade and possess the minds of men. There is no lawful calling that doth absolutely exclude this grace of being spiritually minded in them that are engaged in it, nor any that doth include it. Men may be in the meanest of lawful callings and be so, and men may be in the best and highest and not be so. Consider the calling of the ministry: The work and duty of it calls on those that are employed in it to have their minds and thoughts conversant about spiritual and heavenly things. They are to study about them, to meditate on them, to commit them to memory, to speak them out unto others. It will be said, "Surely such men must needs be spiritually minded." If they go no farther than what is mentioned, I say they must needs be so as printers must needs be learned, who are continually conversant about letters. A man may with great industry engage himself in these things, and yet his mind be most remote from being spiritual. The event doth declare that it may be so. And the reasons of it are manifest. It requires as much if not more watchfulness, more care, more humility, for a minister to be spiritually minded in the discharge of his calling, than for any other sort of men in theirs; and that, as for other reasons, so because the commonness of the exercise of such thoughts, with their design upon others in their expression, will take off their power and efficacy. And he will have little benefit by his own ministry who endeavours not in the first place an experience in his own heart of the power of the truths which he doth teach unto others. And there is evidently as great a failing herein among us as among any other sort of Christians, as every occasion of trial doth demonstrate.

(2.) Although industry in any honest calling be allowable, yet unless men labour to be spiritually minded in the exercise of that industry, they have neither life nor peace. Hereunto all the things before mentioned are necessary; I know not how any of them can be abated; yea, more is required than is expressed in them. If you burn this roll, another must be written, and many like things must be added unto it. And the objection from the expense of time in the observance of them is of no force; for a man may do as much work whilst he is spiritually minded as whilst he is carnal. Spiritual thoughts will no more hinder you in your callings than those that are vain and earthly, which all sorts of men can find leisure for in the midst of their employments. If you have filled a vessel with chaff, yet you may pour into it a great deal of water, which will be contained in the same space and vessel; and if it be necessary that you should take in much of the chaff of the world into your minds, yet are they capable of such measures of grace as shall preserve them sincere unto God.

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Fifthly, This frame will never be preserved, nor the duties mentioned ever be performed in a due manner, unless *we dedicate some part of our time peculiarly unto them.* I speak unto them only concerning whom I suppose that they do daily set apart some portion of time unto holy duties, as prayer and reading of the word, and they find by experience that it succeeds well with them. For the most part, if they lose their seasons they lose their duties; for some have complained that the urgency of business and multiplicity of occasions driving them at first from the fixed time of their duties, hath brought them into a course of neglecting duty itself. Wherefore it is our wisdom to set apart constantly some part of our time unto the exercise of our thoughts about spiritual things in the way of meditation. And I shall close this discourse with some directions in this particular unto them who complain of their disability for the discharge of this duty:—

1. Choose and separate a *fit time or season*, a time of freedom from other occasions and diversions. And because it is our duty to redeem time with respect unto holy duties, such a season may be the more useful the more the purchase of it stands us in. We are not at any time to serve God with what costs us nought, nor with any time that comes within the same rule. If we will allow only *the refuse of our time* unto this duty, when we have nothing else to do, and, it may be, through weariness of occasions are fit for nothing else, we are not to expect any great success in it. This is one pregnant reason why men are so cold and formal, so lifeless in spiritual duties,—namely, the times and seasons which they allot unto them. When the body is wearied with the labour and occasions of the day, and, it may be, the mind in its natural faculties indisposed, even by the means of necessary refreshment, men think themselves meet to *treat with God* about the great concernments of his glory and their own souls! This is that which God condemneth by his prophet: Mal. i. 8, "If ye offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? and if ye offer the lame and sick, is it not evil? offer it now unto thy governor; will he be pleased with thee, or accept thy person?" Both the law of nature and all the laws of holy institutions do require that we should serve God with *the best that we have*, as all the fat of the inwards was to be offered in sacrifice; and shall we think to offer that time unto God wherein we are unmeet to appear before an earthly ruler? Yet such, in my account, are the seasons, especially the evening seasons, that most men choose for the duties of their holy worship. And you may do well to consider beyond the day and time which he hath taken unto himself by an everlasting law, how little of the choice of your time you have offered unto God as a free-will offering, that you may be excited to future diligence.

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If, therefore, you seriously intend this duty, choose the seasons for it wherein you are most fit, when even *the natural vigour of your spirits* is most free and active. Possibly some will say this may be such a time as when the occasions of the world do call most earnestly for your attendance unto them. I say that is the season I would recommend; and if you can conquer your minds to redeem it for God at any rate, your endeavours in it will be prosperous. However, trust not to times that will offer themselves. Take them not up at hazard. Let the time itself be a free-will offering to God, taken from the top of the heap, or the choicest part of your useful time.

2. *Preparation of mind unto a due reverence of God and spiritual things is required previously hereunto.* When we go about this duty, if we rush into thoughts of heavenly things without a due reverential preparation, we shall quickly find ourselves at a loss. See the rule, Eccles. v. 1, 2. "Grace to serve God with reverence and godly fear" is required in all things wherein we have to do with him, as in this duty we have in an immediate and especial manner. Endeavour, therefore, in the first place, to get your hearts *deeply affected with an awful reverence of God*, and a holy regard unto the heavenly nature of the things you would meditate upon. Hereby your minds will be composed, and the roots of other thoughts, be they vain or earthly, which are apt to arise and divert you from this duty, will be cast out. The principles of these contrary thoughts are like Jacob and Esau; they struggle in the same womb, and oftentimes Esau will come first forth, and for a while seem to carry the birthright. If various thoughts do conflict in our minds, some for this world and some for another, those for this world may carry it for a season; but where a due reverence of God hath "cast out the bondwoman and her children," the workings of the flesh in its vain thoughts and imaginations, the mind will be at liberty to exercise itself on spiritual things.

3. *Earnest desires after a renewed sense and relish of spiritual things* are required hereunto. If we engage into this duty merely on a conviction of the *necessity* of it, or set ourselves about it because we think we ought to do so, and it will not be well done utterly to neglect it, we may not expect to be successful in it; but when the soul hath at any time tasted that the Lord is gracious, when its meditations on him have been sweet, when spiritual things have had a savour and relish in the mind and affections, and hereon it comes unto this duty with *earnest desires* to have the like tastes, the like experience, yea, to have them increased, then is it in the way of a hopeful progress. And this also will make us persevere in our endeavours to go through with what we undertake,—namely, when we

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do know by former experience what is to be attained by it, if we dig and search for it as for a treasure.

If you shall think that the right discharge of this duty may be *otherwise attained*, if you suppose that it deserves not all this cost and charge about it, judge by what is past whether it be not advisable to give it over and let it alone. As good lie quietly on the ground as continually attempt to rise and never once effect it. Remember how many successless attempts you have made upon it, and all have come to nothing, or that which is as bad as nothing. I cannot say that in this way you shall always succeed; but I fear you will never have success in this duty without such things as are of the same nature and use with it.

When, after this preparation, you find yourselves yet perplexed and entangled, not able comfortably to persist in spiritual thoughts unto your refreshment, take these two directions for your relief:—

1. *Cry and sigh to God for help and relief.* Bewail the darkness, weakness, and instability of your minds, so as to groan within yourselves for deliverance. And if your designed meditations do issue only in a renewed gracious sense of your own weakness and insufficiency, with application unto God for supplies of strength, they are by no means lost as unto a spiritual account. The thoughts of Hezekiah in his meditations did not seem to have any great order or consistency when he so expressed them: "Like a crane or a swallow, so did I chatter: I did mourn as a dove: mine eyes fail with looking upward: O LORD, I am oppressed; undertake for me," Isa. xxxviii. 14. When the soul labours sincerely for communion with God, but sinks into broken, confused thoughts under the weight of its own weakness, yet if he look to God for relief, his chattering and mourning will be accepted with God and profitable unto himself.

2. *Supply the brokenness of your thoughts with ejaculatory prayers*, according as either the matter of them or your defect in the management of them doth require. So was it with Hezekiah in the instance before mentioned. When his own meditations were weak and broken, he cries out in the midst of them, "O LORD, I am oppressed; undertake for me." And meditation is properly a mixture of spiritual apprehension of God and heavenly things in the thoughts and conceptions of the mind, with desires and supplications thereon.

It is good and profitable to have some special designed subject of meditation in our thoughts. I have at large declared before what things are the proper objects of the thoughts of them that are spiritually minded; but they may be more peculiarly considered as the matter of designed meditation. And they may be taken out of some especial spiritual experience that we have lately had, or some warnings we have received of God, or something wherewith we have been

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peculiarly affected in the reading or preaching of the word, or what we find the present posture and frame of our minds and souls to require, or that which supplies all most frequently,—the person and grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. If any thing of this nature be peculiarly designed antecedently unto this duty, and a season be sought for it with respect thereunto, the mind will be fixed and kept from wandering after a variety of subjects, wherein it is apt to lose itself and bring nothing to perfection.

Lastly, Be not discouraged with an apprehension that *all you can attain unto in the discharge of this duty is so little, so contemptible, as that it is to no purpose to persist in it; nor be wearied with the difficulties you meet withal in its performance.* You have to do with Him only in this matter who "will not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax," whose will it is that none should "despise the day of small things." And "if there be" in this duty "a ready mind, it is accepted according to what a man hath, and not according to what he hath not." He that can bring into this treasury only the mites of broken desires and ejaculatory prayers, so they be his best, shall not come behind them who cast into it out of their greater abundance in ability and skill. To faint and give out because we cannot rise unto such a height as we aim at is a fruit of pride and unbelief. He who finds himself to gain nothing by continual endeavours after holy, fixed meditations, but only a living, active sense of his own vileness and unworthiness, is a sufficient gainer by all his pains, cost, and charge. But ordinarily it shall not be so; constancy in the duty will give ability for it. Those who conscientiously abide in its performance shall increase in light, wisdom, and experience, until they are able to manage it with great success.

These few plain directions may possibly be of some use unto the weaker sort of Christians, when they find a disability in themselves unto the discharge of this duty, wherein those who are spiritually minded ought to be peculiarly exercised.

PART II.

CHAPTER XI.

The seat of spiritual mindedness in the affections—The nature and use of them—The ways and means used by God himself to call the affections of men from the world.

In the account given at the entrance of this discourse of what it is to be spiritually minded, it was reduced under three heads:—

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The FIRST was, *The habitual frame, disposition, and inclination of the mind in its affections.*

The SECOND was, *The usual exercise of the mind in its thoughts, meditations, and desires, about heavenly things.*

Whereunto, THIRDLY, was added, *The complacency of mind in that relish and savour which it finds in spiritual things* so thought and meditated on.

The second of these hath hitherto alone been spoken unto, as that which leads the way unto the others, and gives the most sensible evidence of the state inquired after. Therein consists the stream, which, rising in the fountain of our affections, runs into a holy rest and complacency of mind.

The first and last I shall now handle together, and therein comprehend the account of what it is to be spiritually minded.

Spiritual affections, whereby the soul adheres unto spiritual things, taking in such a savour and relish of them as wherein it finds rest and satisfaction, is the peculiar spring and substance of our being spiritually minded. This is that which I shall now farther explain and confirm.

The great contest of heaven and earth is about the affections of the poor worm which we call man. That the world should contend for them is no wonder; it is the best that it can pretend unto. All things here below are capable of no higher ambition than to be possessed of the affections of men; and, as they lie under the curse, it can do us no greater mischief than by prevailing in this design. But that the holy God should as it were engage in the contest and strive for the affections of man, is an effect of infinite condescension and grace. This he doth expressly: "My son," saith he, "give me thine heart," Prov. xxiii. 26. It is our affections he asketh for, and comparatively nothing else. To be sure, he will accept of nothing from us without them; the most fat and costly sacrifice will not be accepted if it be without a heart. All the ways and methods of the dispensation of his will by his word, all the designs of his effectual grace, are suited unto and prepared for this end,—namely, to recover the affections of man unto himself. So he expresseth himself concerning his word: Deut. x. 12, "And now, Israel, what doth the LORD thy God require of thee, but to fear the LORD thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the LORD thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul?" And as unto the word of his grace, he declares it unto the same purpose: chap. xxx. 6, "And the LORD thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul."

And, on the other side, all the artifices of the world, all the paint

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it puts on its face, all the great promises it makes, all the false appearances and attires it clothes itself withal by the help of Satan, have no other end but to draw and keep the affections of men unto itself. And if the world be preferred before God in this address which is made unto us for our affections, we shall justly perish with the world unto eternity, and be rejected by him whom we have rejected, Prov. i. 24–31.

Our affections are upon the matter our all. They are all we have to give or bestow; the only power of our souls whereby we may give away ourselves from ourselves and become another's. Other faculties of our souls, even the most noble of them, are suited to receive in unto our own advantage; by our affections we can give away *what we are and have.* Hereby we give our hearts unto God, as he requireth. Wherefore, unto him we give our affections unto whom we give our all,—ourselves and all that we have; and to whom we give them not, whatever we give, upon the matter we give nothing at all.

In what we do unto or for others, whatsoever is good, valuable, or praiseworthy in it, proceeds from the affection wherewith we do it. To do any thing for others without an animating affection, is but a contempt of them; for we judge them really unworthy that we should do any thing for them. To give to the poor upon their importunity without pity or compassion, to supply the wants of the saints without love or kindness, with other actings and duties of the like nature, are things of no value, things that recommend us neither unto God nor men. It is so in general with God and the world. Whatsoever we do in the service of God, whatever duty we perform on his command, whatever we undergo or suffer for his name's sake, if it proceed not from the cleaving of our souls unto him by our affections, it is despised by him; he owns us not. As "if a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned," Cant. viii. 7,—it is not to be bought or purchased with riches; so if a man would give to God all the substance of his house without love, it would in like manner be despised. And however, on the other hand, we may be diligent, industrious, and sedulous, in and about the things of this world, yet if it have not our affections, we are not of the world, we belong not unto it. They are *the seat of all sincerity,* which is the jewel of divine and human conversation, the life and soul of every thing that is good and praiseworthy. Whatever men pretend, as their affections are, so are they. *Hypocrisy* is a deceitful interposition of the mind, on various reasons and pretences, between men's *affections* and their *profession,* whereby a man appears to be what he is not. *Sincerity* is the open avowment of the reality of men's affections; which renders them good and useful.

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Affections are in the soul as the helm in the ship; if it be laid hold on by a skilful hand, he turneth the whole vessel which way he pleaseth. If God hath the powerful hand of his grace upon our affections, he turns our souls unto a compliance with his institutions, instructions, in mercy, afflictions, trials, all sorts of providences, and holds them firm against all winds and storms of temptation, that they shall not hurry them on pernicious dangers. Such a soul alone is tractable and pliable unto all intimations of God's will.

All others are stubborn and obstinate, stout-hearted and far from righteousness. And when the world hath the hand on our affections, it turns the mind, with the whole industry of the soul, unto its interest and concerns. And it is in vain to contend with any thing that hath *the power of our affections* in its disposal; it will prevail at last.

On all these considerations it is of the highest importance to consider aright how things are stated in our affections, and what is the prevailing bent of them. "Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend," saith the wise man, Prov. xxvii. 17. Every man hath his edge, which may be sharpened by outward helps and advantages. The predominant inclination of a man's affections is his edge. According as that is set, so he cutteth and works; that way he is sharp and keen, but blunt unto all other things.

Now, because it must be that our affections are either spiritual or earthly in a prevailing degree, that either God hath our hearts or the world, that our edge is towards heaven or towards things here below, before I come to give an account of the nature and operations of spiritual affections, I shall consider and propose some of those arguments and motives which God is pleased to make use of to call off our affections from the desirable things of this world; for as they are weighty and cogent, such as cannot be neglected without the greatest contempt of divine wisdom and goodness, so they serve to press and enforce those arguments and motives that are proposed unto us to set our affections on things that are above, which is to be spiritually minded.

First, He hath, in all manner of instances, *poured contempt on the things of this world*, in comparison of things spiritual and heavenly. All things here below were at first made beautiful and in order, and were declared by God himself to be exceeding good, and that not only in their being and nature, but in the use whereunto they were designed. They were then desirable unto men, and the enjoyment of them would have been a blessing, without danger or temptation; for they were the ordinance of God to lead us unto the knowledge of him and love unto him. But since the entrance of sin, whereby the world fell under the curse and into the power of Satan,

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the things of it, in his management, are become effectual means to draw off the heart and affections from God; for it is the world and the things of it, as summed up by the apostle, 1 John ii. 15, 16, that strive alone for our affections, to be the objects of them. Sin and Satan do but woo for the world, to take them off from God. By them doth the god of this world blind the eyes of them that believe not; and the principal way whereby he worketh in them is by promises of satisfaction unto all the lusts of the minds of men, with a proposal of whatever is dreadful and terrible in the want of them. Being now in this state and condition, and used unto this end, through the craft of Satan and the folly of the minds of men, God hath showed, by various instances, that they are all vain, empty, unsatisfactory, and every way to be despised in comparison of things eternal:—

1. He did it most eminently and signally in *the life, death, and cross of Christ.* What can be seen or found in this world, after the Son of God hath spent his life in it, not having where to lay his head, and after he went out of it on the cross? Had there been aught of real worth in things here below, certainly he had enjoyed it; if not crowns and empires, which were all in his power, yet such goods and possessions as men of sober reasonings and moderate affections do esteem a competency. But things were quite otherwise disposed, to manifest that there is nothing of value or use in these things, but only to support nature unto the performance of service unto God; wherein they are serviceable unto eternity. He never attained, he never enjoyed, more than daily supplies of bread out of the stores of providence; and which alone he hath instructed us to pray for, Matt. vi. 11. In his cross the world proclaimed all its good qualities and all its powers, and hath given unto them that believe its naked face to view and contemplate; nor is it now one jot more comely than it was when it had gotten Christ on the cross. Hence is that inference and conclusion of the apostle: Gal. vi. 14, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, whereby the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world;"—"Since I have believed, since I have had a sense of the power and virtue of the cross of Christ, I have done with all things in this world; it is a dead thing unto me, nor have I any affection for it." This is that which made the difference between the promises of the old covenant and the new: for they were many of them about temporal things, the good things of this world and this life; those of the new are mostly of things spiritual and eternal. God would not call off the church wholly from a regard unto these things, until he had given a sufficient demonstration of their emptiness, vanity, and insufficiency, in the cross of Christ, 2 Cor. iv. 16–18.

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Whither so fast, my friend? What meaneth this rising so early and going to bed late, eating the bread of carefulness? Why this diligence, why these contrivances, why these savings and hoardings of riches and wealth? To what end is all this care and counsel? "Alas!" saith one, "it is to get that which is enough in and of this world for me and my children, to prefer them, to raise an estate for them, which, if not so great as others, may yet be a competency; to give them some satisfaction in their lives and some reputation in the world." Fair pretences, neither shall I ever discourage any from the exercise of industry in their lawful callings; but yet I know that with many this is but a pretence and covering for a shameful engagement of their affections unto the world. Wherefore, in all these things, be persuaded sometimes to have an eye to Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith. Behold how he is set before us in the gospel, poor, despised, reproached, persecuted, nailed to the cross, and all by this world. Whatever be your designs and aims, let his cross continually interpose between your affections and this world. If you are believers, your hopes are within a few days to be with him for evermore. Unto him you must give an account of yourselves, and what you have done in this world. Will it be acceptable with him to declare what you have saved of this world, what you have gained, what you have preserved and embraced yourselves in, and what you have left behind you? Was this any part of his employment and business in this world? hath he left us an example for any such course? Wherefore, no man can set his affections on things here below who hath any regard unto the pattern of Christ, or is in any measure influenced with the power and efficacy of his cross. "My love is crucified," said a holy martyr of old: he whom his soul loved was so, and in him his love unto all things here below. Do you, therefore, find your affections ready to be engaged unto, or too much entangled with, the things of this world? are your desires of increasing them, your hopes of keeping them, your fears of losing them, your love unto them and delight in them, operative in your minds, possessing your thoughts and influencing your conversations? —turn aside a little, and by faith contemplate the life and death of the Son of God; a blessed glass will it be, where you may see what contemptible things they are which you perplex yourselves about. Oh, that any of us should love or esteem the things of this world, the power, riches, goods, or reputation of it, who have had a spiritual view of them in the cross of Christ!

It may be it will be said that the circumstances mentioned were *necessary unto the Lord Christ,* with respect unto the especial work he had to do as the Saviour and Redeemer of the church; and therefore it doth not hence follow that we ought to be poor and

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want all things, as he did. I confess it doth not, and therefore do all along make an allowance for honest industry in our callings. But this follows unavoidably hereon, that what he did forego and trample on for our sake, that ought not to be the object of our affections; nor can such affections prevail in us if he dwell in our hearts by faith.

2. He hath done the same *in his dealings with the apostles*, and generally with all that have been most dear unto him and instrumental unto the interest of his glory in the world, especially since life and immortality were brought to light by the gospel. He had great work to do by the apostles, and that of the greatest use unto his interest and kingdom. The laying of the foundations of the glorious kingdom of Christ in the world was committed unto them. Who would not think that he should provide for them, if not principalities or popedoms, yet at least archbishoprics and bishoprics, with other good ecclesiastical dignities and preferments? Hereby might they have been made meet to converse with princes, and been freed from the contempt of the vulgar. But Infinite Wisdom did otherwise dispose of them and their concerns in this world; for as God was pleased to exercise them with the common afflictions and calamities of this life, which he makes use of to take off the sweetness of present enjoyments, so they lived and died in a condition of poverty, distress, persecution, and reproach. God set them forth as examples unto other ends,—namely, of light, grace, zeal, and holiness in their lives,—so as to manifest of how little concernment unto our own blessedness or an interest in his love is the abundance of all things here below, as also that the want of them all may consist with the highest participation of his love and favour: 1 Cor. iv. 9, 11–13, "I think that God hath set forth us the apostles last, as it were appointed to death: for we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men. Even unto this present hour we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling-place; and labour, working with our own hands: being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it; being defamed, we entreat: we are made as the filth of the world, and are the offscouring of all things unto this day." And if the consideration hereof be not of weight with others, undoubtedly it ought to be so with them who are called to preach the gospel, and are the successors to the apostles. There can be nothing more uncouth, absurd, and shameful, nothing more opposite unto the intimation of the wisdom and will of God in his dealings with those first and most honourable dispensers of it, than for such persons to seek and follow greedily after secular advantages, in worldly power, riches, wealth, and honour. Hence there hath been in former ages an endeavour to separate such persons as were by any means dedicated unto the

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ministry of the gospel from all secular dignities and revenues; yea, some maintained that they were to enjoy nothing of their own, but were to live on alms or the free contributions of the people. But this was quickly condemned as heresy in Wycliffe and others. Yet another sort set up that would pretend thereunto as unto themselves, though they would not oblige all others unto the same rule. This produced some swarms of begging friars, whom they of the church, who were in possession of wealth and power, thought meet to laugh at and let alone. Of late years this contest is at an end. The clergy have happily gotten the victory, and esteem all due unto them that they can by any ways obtain; nor is there any greater crime than for a man to be otherwise minded. But these things are not our present concernment. From the beginning it was not so; and it is well if, in such a way, men are able to maintain the frame of mind inquired after, which is life and peace.

3. God continues to cast contempt on these things, by giving always incomparably *the greatest portion of them unto the vilest men* and his own avowed enemies. This was a temptation under the old covenant, but is highly instructive under the new. None will judge those things to be of real value which a wise man casts out daily unto swine, making little or no use of them in his family. Those monsters of men, Nero and Heliogabalus, had more interest in, and more power over, the things of this world than ever had the best of men;—such villains in nature, so pernicious unto human society, that their not-being was the interest of mankind; but yet more of the world poured on them than they knew either how to *enjoy, possess, use,* or *abuse.* Look on all the principal treasures and powers of this world as in the hand of one of these monsters, and there disposed of by divine providence, and you may see at what rate God values them.

At this day, the greatest, most noble, wealthy, and fruitful parts of the earth are given unto the great Turk, with some other eastern potentates, either Mohammedans or Pagans, who are prepared for eternal destruction. And if we look nearer home, we may see in whose hands is the power of the chiefest nations of Europe, and unto what end it is used. The utmost of what some Christian professors among ourselves are intent and designing upon, as that which would render them wondrous happy, in their own apprehensions, put hundreds of them together, and it would not answer the waste made by the forementioned beasts every day.

Doth not God proclaim herein that the things of this world are not to be valued or esteemed? If they were so, and had *a real worth in themselves,* would the holy and righteous God make such a distribution of them? The most of those whom he loves, who enjoy

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his favour, not only have comparatively the meanest share of them, but are exercised with all the evils that the destitution and want of them can be accompanied withal. His open and avowed enemies, in the meantime, have more than they know what to do withal. Who would set his heart and affections on those things which God poureth into the bosoms of the vilest men, to be a snare unto them here and an aggravation of their condemnation for ever? It seems you may go and take the world, and take the curse, death and hell, along with it, but "what will it profit a man to gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" What can any man do on the consideration hereof, who will not forego all his hopes and expectations from God, but retreat unto the faith of things spiritual and eternal, as containing an excellency in them incomparably above all that he enjoyed here below?

4. He doth *continue to give perpetual instances of their uncertainty and unsatisfactoriness, in the utter disappointment of men that have had expectations from them.* The ways hereof are so various, and the instances so multiplied, as that most men in the world,—unless they are like the fool in the Gospel, who bade his soul take its ease for many years, because his barns were full,—live in perpetual fears and apprehensions that they shall speedily lose whatever they enjoy, or are under the power of stupid security. But as unto this consideration of them, there is such an account given by the wise man as unto which nothing can be added, or which no reason or experience is able to contradict, Eccles. ii. By these and the like ways doth God cast contempt on all things here below, discovering the folly and falseness of the promises which the world makes use of to allure our affections unto itself. This, therefore, is to be laid as the foundation in all our considerations unto what or whom we shall cleave by our affections, that God hath not only declared the insufficiency of these things to give us that rest and happiness which we seek after, but also poured contempt upon them, in his holy, wise disposal of them in the world.

Secondly, God hath added unto their vanity *by shortening the lives of men*, reducing their continuance in this world unto so short and uncertain a season as it is impossible they should take any solid satisfaction in what they enjoy here below. So it is expressed by the psalmist, "Behold, thou hast made my days as an hand-breadth; and mine age is as nothing before thee." Hence he draws two conclusions:—1. That "every man at his best state is altogether vanity." 2. That "every man walketh in a vain show: surely they are disquieted in vain: he heapeth up riches, and knoweth not who shall gather them," Ps. xxxix. 5, 6. The uncertainty and shortness of the lives of men render all their endeavours and contrivances about

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earthly things both vain and foolish. When men lived eight or nine hundred years, they had opportunity to suck out all the sweetness that was in creature-comforts, to make large provisions of them, and to have long projections about them; but when they had so, they all issued in that violence, oppression, and wickedness, which brought the flood on the world of ungodly men. And it still so abides. The more of and the longer men enjoy these things, the more, without the sovereign preservative of grace, will they abound in sin and provocation of God. But God hath reduced the life of man unto the small pittance of seventy years, casting what may fall out of a longer continuance into travail and sorrow. Besides, that space is shortened with the most, by various and innumerable incidences and occasions. Wherefore, in these seventy years, consider how long it is before men begin to have a taste or gust of the things of this life; how many things fall in cross, to make us weary of them before the end of our days; how few among us (not one of a thousand) attain that age; what is the uncertainty of all men living as to the continuance of their lives unto the next day; and we shall see that the holy, wise God hath left no such season for their enjoyment as might put a value upon them. And when, on the other hand, it is remembered that this man, who is of such short continuance in this world, is yet made for eternity, eternal blessedness or misery, which state depends wholly on his interest on things above, and setting his affections on them, they must forfeit all their reason, as well as bid defiance unto the grace of God, who give them up unto things below.

Thirdly, God hath openly and fully declared *the danger that is in these things*, as unto their enjoyment and use. And what multitudes of souls miscarry by an inordinate adherence unto them! for they are the matter of those temptations whereby the souls of men are ruined for ever; the fuel that supplies the fire of their lusts, until they are consumed by it.

Men under the power of spiritual convictions fall not into sin, fail not eternally, but by the means of temptation; that is the mire wherein this rush doth grow. [As] for others, who live and die in the madness and wildness of nature, without any restraint in their minds from the power of convictions, they need no external temptations, but only opportunities to exert their lusts. But [as] for those who, by any means, are convinced of sin, righteousness, and judgment, so as to design the ordering of their lives with respect unto the sense they have of them, they fall not into *actual sin but upon temptations*. That, whatever it be, which causeth, occasioneth, and prevaileth on, a convinced person unto sin, that is temptation. Wherefore, this is the great means of the ruin of the souls of men.

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Now, though there are many principles of temptation, many causes that actually concur unto its efficacy, as sin, Satan, and other men, yet the matter of almost all ruinous temptations is taken out of this world and the things of it. Thence doth Satan take all his darts; thence do evil men derive all the ways and means whereby they corrupt others; and from thence is all the fuel of sin and lust taken. And, which adds unto this evil, all that is in the world contributes its utmost thereunto. "All that is in the world" is "the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life," 1 John ii. 16. It is not a direct, formal annumeration of the things that are in the world, nor a distribution of them under several heads, but it is so of the principal lusts of the minds of men, whereunto all things in the world are subservient. Wherefore, not only the matter of all temptations is taken out of the world, but every thing that is in the world is apt and fit to be abused unto that end; for it were easy to show that there is nothing desirable or valuable in this whole world, but it is reducible unto a subserviency unto one or other of these lusts, and is applicable unto the interest and service of temptations and sins.

When men hear of these things, they are apt to say, "*Let the dream be unto them that are openly wicked, and the interpretation of it unto them that are profligate in sin.*" Unto unclean persons, drunkards, oppressors, proud, ambitious persons, it may be it is so; but as unto them, they use the things of this world with a due moderation, so as they are no snare unto them! But to own they are used unto what end soever, if the affections of men are set upon them, one way or other, there is nothing in the world but is thus a snare and temptation. However, we should be very careful how we adhere unto or undervalue that which is the cause and means of the ruin of multitudes of souls. By the warnings given us hereof doth God design, as unto the use of means, to teach us the vanity and danger of fixing our affections on things below.

Fourthly, Things are so ordered in the holy, wise dispensation of God's providence, that *it requires much spiritual wisdom to distinguish between the use and the abuse of these things*, between a lawful care about them and an inordinate cleaving unto them. Few distinguish aright here, and therefore in these things will many find their great mistake at the last day. [For] the disappointments that they will fall under, as to what concerns their earthly enjoyments, and the use of them wherewith they were intrusted, see Matt. xxv. 34, to the end of the chapter.

It is granted that there is a lawful use of these things, a lawful care and industry about them; so it is also acknowledged, it cannot be denied, that there is an abuse of them, springing from an inordi-

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nate love and cleaving unto them. But here men deceive themselves, taking their measures by the most crooked, uncertain rules. Some make their own inclinations the rule and measure of what is lawful and allowable; some, the example of others; some, the course of the world; some, their own real or pretended necessities. They confess that there is an inordinate love of those things, and an abuse of them, in excesses of various sorts, which the *Scripture plainly affirms*, and which *experience gives open testimony unto;* but as unto *their* state and circumstances, their care, love, and industry are all allowable. That which influenceth all these persons is self-love, which inveterate, corrupt affections and false reasonings do make an application of unto these occasions.

Hence we have men approving of themselves as just stewards of their enjoyments, whilst others judge them hard, covetous, earthly-minded, no way laying out what they are intrusted withal unto the glory of God in any due proportion. Others also think not amiss of themselves in this kind, who live in palpable excesses, either of pride of life, or sensual pleasures, vain apparel, or the like. So, in particular, most men in their feastings and entertainments walk in direct contempt of the rule which our Saviour gives in that case, Luke xiv. 12–14, and yet approve themselves therein.

But what if any of us should be *mistaken in our rule and the application of it* unto our conditions? Men at sea may have a fair gale of wind, wherewith they may sail freely and smoothly for a season, and yet, instead of being brought into a port, be cast by it at last on destructive shelves or rocks.

And what if that which we esteem allowable love, care, and industry, should prove to be the fruit of earthly affections, inordinate and predominant in us? What if we miss in our measures, and that which we approve of in ourselves should be *disapproved of God?* We are cast for ever; we belong unto the world; and with the world we shall perish.

It may be said, that "if it be so difficult to distinguish between these things,—namely, the lawful use of things here below and their abuse, the allowable industry about them and the inordinate love of them,—on the knowledge whereof our eternal condition depends, it is impossible but men must spend their time in solicitous anxiety of mind, as not knowing when they have aright discharged their duty."

Ans. 1. I press these things at present no farther but only to show *how dangerous a thing it is for any to incline in his affections unto the things of this world,* wherein an excess is ruinous and hardly discoverable. Surely no wise man will venture freely and frequently unto the edge of such a precipice. He will be jealous of his measures, lest they will not hold by the rule of the word. And a due

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sense hereof is the best preservative of the soul from cleaving inordinately unto things below. And when God in any instance, by afflictions or otherwise, shows unto believers their transgression herein, and how they have exceeded, Job xxxvi. 8, 9, it makes them careful for the future. They will now or never be diligent that they fall not under that peremptory rule, 1 John ii. 15.

2. When the soul is upright and sincere, there is no need in this case of any more *solicitousness or anxiety of mind* than there is unto or about other duties; but when it is biassed and acted by self-love, and its more strong inclinations unto things present, it is impossible men should enjoy solid peace, or be free from severe reflections on them by their own consciences, in such seasons wherein they are awakened unto their duty and the consideration of their state, nor have I any thing to tender for their relief. With others it is not so, and therefore I shall so far digress in this place as to give some directions unto those who, in sincerity, would be satisfied in this lawful use and enjoyment of earthly things, so as not to adhere unto them with inordinate affection:—

1. Remember always that you are not *proprietors* or *absolute possessors of those things*, but only stewards of them. With respect unto men, you are or may be just proprietors of what you enjoy; but with respect unto Him who is the great possessor of heaven and earth, you are but stewards. This stewardship we are to give an account of, as we are taught in the parable, Luke xvi. 1, 2. This rule always attended unto will be a blessed guide in all instances and occasions of duty.

But if a man be left in trust with houses and large possessions, as a steward for the right lord, owner, and proprietor of them, if he fall into a pleasing dream that they are all his own, and use them accordingly, it will be a woful surprisal unto him when he shall be called to account for all that he hath received and laid out, whether he will or no, and when indeed he hath nothing to pay. It will scarce be otherwise with them at the great day who forget the trust which is committed to them, and suppose they may do what they will with what they call *their own*.

2. There is nothing, in the ways of *getting, enjoying, or using of these things*, but giveth its own evidence unto spiritual wisdom whether it be within the bounds of duty or no. Men are not lightly deceived herein, but when they are evidently under the power of corrupt affections, or will not at all attend unto themselves and the language of their own consciences. It is a man's own fault alone if he know not wherein he doth exceed.

A due examination of ourselves in the sight of God with respect unto these things, the frame and actings of our minds in them, will

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greatly give check unto our corrupt inclinations and discover the folly of those reasonings whereby we deceive ourselves into the love of earthly things, or justify ourselves therein, and bring to light the secret principle of self-love, which is the root of all this evil.

3. If you would be able to make a right judgment in this case, be sure that you have another object for your affections, which hath a predominant interest in your minds, and which will evidence itself so to have on all occasions. Let a man be never so observant of himself as unto all outward duties required of him with respect unto these earthly things; let him be liberal in the disposal of them on all occasions; let him be watchful against all intemperance and excesses in the use of them,—yet if he hath not another object for his affections, which hath a prevailing influence upon them, if they are not set upon the things that are above, one way or other it is the world that hath the possession of his heart: for the affections of our minds will and must be placed in chief on things below or things above. There will be a predominant love in us; and therefore, although all our actions should testify another frame, yet if God and the things of God be not the principal object of our affections, by one way or other unto the world we do belong. This is that which is taught us so expressly by our Saviour, Luke xvi. 9–13, "And I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations. He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much. If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own? No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon."

4. Labour continually for *the mortification of your affections* unto the things of this world. They are, in the state of corrupted nature, set and fixed on them, nor will any reasonings or considerations effectually divert them, or take them off in a due manner, unless they are mortified unto them by the cross of Christ. Whatever change be otherwise wrought in them, it will be of no advantage unto us. It is mortification alone that will take them off from earthly things unto the glory of God. Hence the apostle, having given us that charge, "Set your affection on things above, and not on things on the earth," Col. iii. 2, adds this as the only way and means we may do so, "Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth," verse 5. Let no man think that his affections will

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fall off from earthly things of their own accord. The keenness and sharpness of them in many things may be abated by the decay of their natural powers in age and the like; they may be mated by frequent disappointments, by sicknesses, pains, and afflictions, as we shall see immediately; they may be willing unto a distribution of earthly enjoyments, to have the reputation of it, wherein they still cleave unto the world, but under another shape and appearance; or they may be startled by convictions, so as to do many things gladly that belong to another frame: but, on one pretence or other, under one appearance or other, they will for ever adhere or cleave unto earthly things, unless they are mortified unto them through faith in the blood and cross of Christ, Gal. vi. 14. Whatever thoughts you may have of yourselves in this matter, unless you have the experience of a work of mortification on your affections, you can have no refreshing ground of assurance that you are in any thing spiritually minded.

5. In all the instances of duty belonging unto your stewardship of earthly things, *attend diligently unto the rule of the word.* Without this the grace exhorted unto may be abused. So of old, under a pretence of a relinquishment of the things of this world, because of the danger in adhering unto them, their own superstition and the craft of other men prevailed with many to part with all they had unto the service of others, not better, it may be not so good as themselves. This evil wholly arose from want of attendance unto the rule of truth, which gives no such direction in ordinary cases. But there is not much seen in these days of an excess in this kind; but, on the other hand, in all instances of duties of this nature, most men's minds are habitually influenced with pretences, reasonings, and considerations, that turn the scales as unto what they ought to do, in proportion in this duty, on the side of the world. If you would be safe, you must, in all instances of duty,—as in works of charity, piety, and compassion,—give authority in and over your souls unto the rule of the word. Let neither self, nor unbelief, nor the custom and example of others, be heard to speak; but let the rule alone be attended unto, and to what that speaks yield obedience.

Unless these things are found in us, none of us, no man living, if it be not so with him, can have any refreshing evidence or assurance that he is not under the power of an inordinate, yea, and predominant love unto this world.

And, indeed, to add a little farther on the occasion of this digression, it is a sad thing to have this exception made against the state of any man on just grounds, "Yea, but *he loves the world.*" He is sober and industrious, he is constant in duties of religion; it may be, an earnest preacher of them; a man of sound principles, and blame-

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less as unto the excesses of life;—"but *he loves the world!*" The question is, How doth this appear? it may be, what you say is but one of those evil surmises which all things are filled withal. Wherefore, I speak it not at all to give countenance unto the rash judging of others, which none are more prone unto than those who, one way or other, are eminently guilty themselves; but I would have every man judge himself, that we be none of us condemned of the Lord. If, notwithstanding the things mentioned, any of us do centre in self, which is supplied and filled with the world,—if we prefer self above all other things, do aim at the satisfaction of self in what we do well or ill, are useless unto the only good and blessed end of these earthly things, in supplying the wants of others according unto the proportions wherewith we are intrusted,—it is to be feared that the world and the things that are in it have the principal interest in our affections.

And the danger is yet greater with them who divert on the other extreme. Such are they who, in the pride of life, vanity in apparel, excess in drinking, pampering the flesh every day, tread close on the heels of the world, if they do not also fully keep company with it. Altogether in vain is it for such persons to countenance themselves with an appearance of other graces in them, or the sedulous performance of other duties. This one rule will eternally prevail against them: "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." And, by the way, let men take heed how they walk in any instance against the known judgment and practice of the wiser or more experienced sort of Christians, to their regret and sorrow, if not unto their offence and scandal, or in any way whereunto they win the consent of their own light and conscience by such reasonings and considerations as will not hold weight in the balance of the sanctuary. Yet thus and no otherwise is it with all them who, under a profession of religion, do indulge unto any excesses wherein they are conformed unto the world.

Fifthly, God makes a *hedge* against the excess of the affections of men rational and any way enlightened unto the things of this world, by suffering the generality of men *to carry the use of them*, and to *be carried by the abuse of them*, into actings so filthy, so abominable, so ridiculous, as reason itself cannot but abhor. Men by them transform themselves into beasts and monsters, as might be manifested by all sorts of instances. Hence the wise man prayed against riches, lest he should not be able to manage the temptations wherewith they are accompanied, Prov. xxx. 8, 9.

Lastly, To close this matter, and to show us what we are to expect in case we set our affections on things here below, and they have thereby a predominant interest in our hearts, God hath positively

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determined and declared that if it be so, he will have nothing to do with us, nor will accept of those affections which we pretend we can and do spare for him and spiritual things. "If we abstain from open sins, if we abhor the lewdness and uncleanness of men in the world, if we are constant in religious duties, and give ourselves up to walk after the most strict sort in religion, like Paul in his Pharisaism, may we not," will some say or think, "find acceptance with God, though our hearts cleave inordinately unto the things of this world?" I say, God hath peremptorily determined the contrary; and if other arguments will not prevail with us, he leaves us at last unto this, "Go, love the world and the things of it; but know assuredly you do it unto the eternal loss of your souls," 1 John ii. 15; James iv. 4.

These few instances have I given of the arguments and motives whereby God is pleased to deter us from fixing our affections on things here below; and they are most of them such only as he maketh use of in the administration of his providence. There are two other heads of things that offer themselves unto our consideration:—

1. The *ways, means, arguings,* and *enticements,* which the world makes use of to draw, keep, and secure, the affections of men unto itself. 2. The *secret, powerful efficacy of grace,* in taking off the heart from these things, and turning and drawing it unto God, with the arguments and motives that the Holy Spirit maketh use of in and by the word unto this end; wherein we must show what is the act of conquering grace, whereby the heart is finally prevailed on to choose and adhere unto God in love immutable. But these things cannot be handled in any measure, according to their nature and importance, without such length of discourse as I cannot here divert unto. I shall therefore proceed unto that which is the proper and peculiar subject before us.

CHAPTER XII.

What is required in and unto our affections that they may be spiritual—A threefold work on the affections described.

To declare the interest of our affections in this frame of being spiritually minded, and what they contribute thereunto, I shall do these three things:—First, Declare *what is required hereunto, that our affections may be spiritual,* wherein lies the foundation of the whole duty; secondly, What are *their actings* when they are so spiritual; thirdly, What are *the means* whereby they may be kept and preserved in that frame; with sundry other things of the like nature.

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How our affections are concerned in or do belong unto the frame of mind inquired after hath been before declared. Without spiritual affections we cannot be spiritually minded. And that they may be of this use, three things are required:—I. Their principle; II. Their object; III. The way and manner of their application unto their proper object by virtue of that principle.

I. As unto the principle acting in them, that our affections may be spiritual and the spring of our being spiritually minded, it is required that they be *changed, renewed, and inlaid with grace, spiritual and supernatural.* To clear the sense hereof, we must a little consider what is their state by nature, and then by what means they may be wrought upon as unto a change or a renovation; for they are like unto some things which in themselves and their own nature are poisonous, but being corrected, and receiving a due temperament from a mixture of other ingredients, become medicinal and of excellent use.

By nature our affections, all of them, are depraved and corrupted. Nothing in the whole nature of man, no power or faculty of the soul, is fallen under greater disorder and depravation by the entrance of sin than our affections are. In and by them is the heart wholly gone and turned off from God, Tit. iii. 3. It were a long work to set forth this depravation of our affections, nor doth it belong unto our present design. Some few things I shall briefly observe concerning it, to make way unto what is proposed concerning their change:—

1. This is the only corruption and depravation of our nature by the fall evident in and unto reason or the light of nature itself. Those who were wise among the heathen both saw it and complained of it. They found a weakness in the mind, but saw nothing of its darkness and depravation as unto things spiritual. But they were sensible enough of this disorder and tumult of the affections in things moral, which renders the minds of men "like the troubled sea, whose waters cast up mire and dirt." This greatly aggravates the neglect of them who are not sensible of it in themselves, seeing it is discernible in the light of nature.

2. They are, as depraved, the seat and subject of all lusts, both of the flesh and of the spirit; yea, lust or evil concupiscence is nothing but the irregular motion and acting of our affections as depraved, defiled, corrupted, Rom. vii. 8. Hence no one sin can be mortified without a change wrought in the affections.

3. They are the spring, root, and cause of all actual sin in the world, Matt. xv. 19. The "evil heart," in the Scripture, is the corrupt affections of it, with the imaginations of the mind, whereby they are excited and acted, Gen. vi. 5. These are they which at this time fill

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the whole world with wickedness, darkness, confusion, and terror; and we may learn what is their force and efficacy from these effects. So the nature of the plague is most evident when we see thousands dying of it every week.

4. They are the way and means whereby the soul applies itself unto all sinful objects and actings. Hence are they called our "members," our "earthly members;" because as the body applies itself unto its operations by its members, so doth the soul apply itself unto what belongs unto it by its affections, Rom. vi. 13; Col. iii. 5.

5. They will not be under the conduct of the mind, its light or convictions. Rebellion against the light of the mind is the very form whereby their corruption acts itself, Job xxiv. 13. Let the apprehensions of the mind and its notions of good and evil be what they will, they reject them, and lead the soul in pursuit of their inclinations. Hence, no natural man whatsoever doth in any measure answer the light of his mind or the convictions of his understanding, but he sees and approves of better things, following those that are worse; and there is no greater spiritual judgment than for men to be given up unto themselves and their own evil affections, Rom. i. 26.

Many other instances might be given of the greatness of that depravation which our affections are fallen under by sin; these may suffice as unto our present purpose.

In general, this depravation of our affections by nature may be reduced unto two heads:—

1. An *utter aversation from God and all spiritual things.* In this lies the spring of all that dislike of God and his ways that the hearts of men are filled withal; yea, they do not only produce an aversation from them and dislike of them, but they fill the mind with an enmity against them. Therefore men say in their hearts unto God, "Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways. What is the Almighty, that we should serve him? and what profit should we have, if we pray unto him?" Job xxi. 14, 15. See Rom. i. 28, viii. 7.

2. An *inordinate cleaving unto things vain, earthly, and sensual,* causing the soul to engage into the pursuit of them as the horse rushes into the battle.

Whilst our affections are in this state and condition we are far enough from being spiritually minded, nor is it possible to engage them into an adherence unto or delight in spiritual things.

In this state they may be two ways wrought upon, and yet not so renewed as to be serviceable unto this end:—

1. There may be various *temporary impressions* made on them. Sometimes there is so by the preaching of the word. Hereon men

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may hear it with joy, and do many things gladly. Sometimes it is so by judgments, dangers, sicknesses, apprehensions of the approach of death, Ps. lxxviii. 35–37. These things take men off for a season from their greedy delight in earthly things, and the pursuit of the interest of lust in making provision for the flesh. On many other occasions, by great variety of causes, there may be temporary impressions made on the affections, that shall seem for a season to have turned the stream of them. And thereon we have many who any day will be wholly, as it were, for God, resolved to forsake sin and all the pleasures of it, but the next return unto all their former excesses; for this is the effect of those impressions, that whereas men ordinarily are predominantly acted by love, desire, and delight, which lead them to act according unto the true natural principles of the soul, now they are for a season acted by fear and dread, which put a kind of force on all their inclinations. Hereon they have other thoughts of good and evil, of things eternal and temporal, of God and their own duty, for a season. And hereon some of them may and do persuade themselves that there is a change in their hearts and affections, which there is not; like a man who persuades himself that he hath lost his ague because his present fit is over. The next trial of temptation carries them away again unto the world and sin.

There are sometimes sudden impressions made on spiritual affections, which are always of great advantage to the soul, renewing its engagements unto God and duty. So was it with Jacob, Gen. xxviii. 16–20; so is it often with believers in hearing the word, and on other occasions. On all of them they renew their cleavings unto God with love and delight. But the effect of these impressions on unrenewed affections are neither spiritual nor durable; yea, for the most part, they are but checks given in the providence of God unto the raging of their lusts, Ps. ix. 20.

2. They are liable unto *an habitual change.* This the experience of all ages gives testimony to. There may be an habitual change wrought in the passions and affections of the mind, as unto the inordinate and violent pursuit of their inclinations, without any gracious renovation of them. Education, philosophy, or reason, long afflictions, spiritual light and gifts, have wrought this change. So Saul, upon his call to be king, became "another man." Hereby persons naturally passionate and furious have been made sedate and moderate, and those who have been sensual have become temperate, yea, and haters of religion to be professors of it. All these things, and many more of the like nature, have proceeded from a change wrought upon the affections only, whilst the mind, will, and conscience, have been totally unsanctified.

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By *this change*, when it is alone, *no man ever became spiritually minded;* for whereas there are two parts of the depravation of our affections, that whereby they are turned off from God, and that whereby they inordinately cleave unto other things, their change principally, if not only, respects the latter. They are brought into some order with respect unto present things. The mind is not continually tossed up and down by them as the waves of the sea, that are troubled, and cast up mire and dirt. They do not carry those in whom they are into vicious, sensual actions, but they allow them to make virtue in moderation, sobriety, temperance, fidelity, and usefulness in several ways, to be their design; and it is admirable to think what degrees of eminency in all sorts of moral virtues, upon this one principle of moderating the affections, even many among the heathens attained unto. But as unto their aversation from God and spiritual things, in the true spiritual notion of them, they are not cured by this change; at least this change may be, and yet this latter not be wrought.

Again; this alteration doth but *turn the course or stream of men's affections*, it doth not change the nature of them. They are the same in their spring and fountain as ever they were, only they are habituated unto another course than what of themselves they are inclined unto. You may take a young whelp of the most fierce and savage creature, as of a tiger or a wolf, and by custom or usage make it as tame and harmless as any domestic creature,—a dog, or the like: but although it may be turned into quite another way or course of acting than what it was of itself inclined unto, yet its nature is not changed; and therefore frequently, on occasion, opportunity, or provocation, it will fall into its own savage inclination, and having tasted of the blood of creatures, it will never be reclaimed. So is it with the depraved affections of men with respect unto their change: their streams are turned, they are habituated unto a new course; but their nature is not altered, at least not from rational unto spiritual, from earthly unto heavenly. Yet this is that which was most beautiful and desirable in nature, the glory of it, and the utmost of its attainments. He who has by any means proceeded unto such a moderation of his affections as to render him kind, benign, patient, useful, preferring public good before private, ordinate and temperate in all things, will rise up in judgment against those who, professing themselves to be under the conduct of the light of grace, do yet, by being morose, angry, selfish, worldly, manifest that their affections are not subdued by the power of that grace. Wherefore, that we may be spiritually minded, there is yet another work upon our affections required, which is their internal renovation, whereby not only the course of their actings is changed, but their nature is

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altered and spiritually renewed. I intend that which is expressed in that great evangelical promise, Isa. xi. 6–9, "The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain." A change and alteration is promised in the natures, principles, and first inclinations, of the worst and most savage sinners who pass under the power of gospel grace.

This is that which is required of us in a way of duty, Eph. iv. 23, "Be ye renewed in the spirit of your mind." There is a renovation of the mind itself, by the communication of spiritual, saving light and understanding thereunto, whereof I have treated elsewhere at large. See Rom. xii. 2; Eph. i. 17, 18. But "the spirit of the mind," that whereby it is enlivened, led, and disposed unto its actings, that is to be renewed also. "The spirit of the mind" is in this place opposed unto "the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts," or depraved affections, Eph. iv. 22. These, therefore, are that "spirit of the mind," which inclines, bends, and leads it to act suitably unto its inclinations, which is to be renewed. And when our affections are inclined by the saving grace of the Holy Spirit, then are they renewed, and not else. No other change will give them a spiritual renovation. Hereby those things which are only natural affections in themselves, in them that believe become fruits of the Spirit: Gal. v. 22, 23, "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace," etc. They continue the same as they were in their essence, substance, and natural powers; but are changed in their properties, qualities, inclinations, whenever a new nature is given unto them. So the waters at Marah were the same waters still before and after their cure. But of themselves and in their own nature they were bitter, so as that the people could not drink them; on the casting of a tree into them, they were made sweet and useful, Exod. xv. 25. So was it with the waters of Jericho, which were cured by casting salt into them, 2 Kings ii. 19–22. Our affections continue the same as they were in their nature and essence; but they are so cured by grace as that their properties, qualities, and inclinations, are all cleansed or renewed. The tree or salt that is cast into these waters, whereby the cure is wrought, is the love of God above all, proceeding from faith in him by Christ Jesus.

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CHAPTER XIII.

The work of the renovation of our affections—How differenced from any other impression on or change wrought in them, and how it is evidenced so to be—The first instance, in the universality accompanying of affections spiritually renewed—The order of the exercise of our affections with respect unto their objects.

THAT which is our concernment herein is, to inquire of what nature *that work is which hath been on our own affections, or in them*, and how it differs from those which, whatever they do or effect, yet will not render us nor themselves spiritual.

And we ought to use the best of our diligence herein, because the great means whereby multitudes delude and deceive their own souls, persuading themselves that there has been an effectual work of the grace of the gospel in them, is the change that they find in their affections; which may be on many occasions without any spiritual renovation:—

1. As unto the *temporary* and *occasional* impressions on the affections before mentioned, whether from the word or any other divine warning by afflictions or mercies, they are common unto all sorts of persons. Some there are whose "consciences are seared with a hot iron," 1 Tim. iv. 2, "who" thereon, "being past feeling" (senseless of all calls, warnings, and rebukes), "have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness," Eph. iv. 19. Such persons, having hardened themselves in a long course of sin, and being given up unto a reprobate mind, or vile affections, in a way of judgment, have, it may be, no such impressions on their affections on any occasion as to move them with a sense of things spiritual and eternal. They may be terrified with danger, sudden judgments, and other revelations of the wrath of God from heaven against the ungodliness of men, but they are not drawn to take shelter in thoughts of spiritual things. Nothing but hell will awaken them unto a due consideration of themselves and things eternal.

It is otherwise with the generality of men who are not profligate and impudent in sinning; for although they are in a natural condition and a course of sin, in the neglect of known duties, yet, by one means or other,—most frequently by the preaching of the word,—their affections are stirred towards heavenly things.

Sometimes they are afraid, sometimes they have hopes and desires about them. These put them on resolutions, and some temporary endeavours to change their lives, to abstain from sin and to perform holy duties. But, as the prophet complains, "their goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew, it goeth away." Yet

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by means hereof do many poor ignorant souls deceive themselves, and cry "Peace, peace, when there is no peace." And they will sometimes so express how they are affected, with complaints of themselves as unto their long neglect of spiritual things, that others may entertain good hopes concerning them; but all comes to nothing in the trial.

There is no difficulty unto spiritual light to distinguish between these *occasional impressions* on the affections and that *spiritual renovation* of them which we inquire after. This alone is sufficient to do it, that they are all of them temporary and evanid. They abide "for a while" only, as our Saviour speaks, and every occasion defeats all their efficacy. They may be frequently renewed, but they never abide. Some of them immediately pass away, and are utterly lost between the place where they hear the word and their own habitations; and in vain shall they inquire after them again,—they are gone for ever. Some have a larger continuance, endure longer in the mind, and produce some outward effects. None of them will hold any trial or shock of temptation.

Yet I have somewhat to say unto those who have such impressions on their affections, and warnings by them:—

(1.) *Despise them not*, for God is in them. Although he may not be in them in a way of saving grace, yet he is in them in that which may be preparatory thereto. They are not common human accidents, but especial divine warnings.

(2.) *Labour to retain them*, or a sense of them, upon your hearts and consciences. You have got nothing by losing so many of them already; and if you proceed in their neglect, after a while you will hear of them no more.

(3.) *Put no more in them than belongs unto them.* Do not presently conclude that your state is good, because you have been affected at the hearing of the word, or under a sickness, or in a danger. Hereon you may think that now all is well with them, wherewith they please themselves, until they are wholly immersed in their former security.

2. We may consider the difference that is between the *habitual change* of the affections before described, and that *renovation by grace* which renders them spiritual. And this is of great concernment unto us all, to inquire into it with diligence. Multitudes are herein deceived, and that unto their ruin; for they resolve their present peace into, and build their hopes of eternal life on, such a change in themselves as will not abide the trial. This difference, therefore, is to be examined by Scripture light and the experience of them that do believe. And,—

(1.) There is a double universality with respect unto the spiritual renovation of our affections,—that which is subjective, with respect

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unto the affections themselves; and that which is objective, with respect unto spiritual things.

[1.] Sanctification extends itself unto the "whole spirit, and soul, and body," 1 Thess. v. 23. When we say that we are *sanctified in part* only, we do not say that any part, power, or faculty of the soul is unsanctified, but only that the work is not absolutely perfect in any of them. All sin may retain power in some one affection, as anger, fear, or love, as unto actual eruptions and effects, more than in all the rest, as one affection may be more eminently sanctified in some than in others; for it may have advantages unto this end from men's natural tempers and various outward circumstances. Hence, some find little difficulty in the mortification of all other lusts or corruptions in comparison of what they meet withal in some one inordinate affection or corruption. This, it may be, David had regard unto, Ps. xviii. 23. I have known persons shining exemplarily in all other graces who have been scarce free from giving great scandal by the excess of their passions and easy provocation thereunto. And yet they have known that the setting themselves unto the sincere, vigorous mortification of that disorder is the most eminent pledge of their sincerity in other things; for the trial of our self-denial lies in the things that our natural inclinations lie strongest toward. Howbeit, as was said, there is no affection where there is this work of renovation but it is sanctified and renewed; none of them is left absolutely unto the service of sin and Satan. And therefore, whereas, by reason of the advantages mentioned, sin doth greatly contend to use some of them unto its interest and service in a peculiar manner, yet are they enabled unto and made meet for gracious actings, and do in their proper seasons put forth themselves accordingly. There is no affection of the mind from whence the soul and conscience hath received the greatest damage,—that was, as it were, the field whereon the contest is managed between sin and grace,—but hath its spiritual use and exercise when the mind is renewed.

There are some so inordinately subject to anger, and passion therein, as if they were absolutely under the power and dominion of it; yet do they also know how to be "angry and sin not," in being angry at sin in themselves and others: "Yea, what indignation; yea, what revenge!" etc., 2 Cor. vii. 11. Yea, God is pleased sometimes to leave somewhat more than ordinary of the power of corruption in one affection, that it may be an occasion of the continual exercise of grace in the other affections. Yet are they all sanctified in their degree, that which is relieved as well as that which doth relieve. And therefore, as the remainder of sin in them that believe is called "the old man," which is to be crucified in all the members of it, because of its adherence unto the whole person in all its powers and faculties; so the grace

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implanted in our natures is called "the new man," there being nothing in us that is not seasoned and affected with it. As nothing in our natures escaped the taint of sin, so nothing in our natures is excepted from the renovation that is by grace. He in whom any one affection is utterly unrenewed hath no one graciously renewed in him. Let men take heed how they indulge to any depraved affection, for it will be an unavoidable impeachment of their sincerity. Think not to say, with Naaman, "God be merciful unto me in this thing; in all others I will be for him."

He requires the whole heart, and will have it or none. The chief work of a Christian is to make all his affections, in all their operations, subservient unto the life of God, Rom. vi. 17, 18; and he who is wise will keep a continual watch over those wherein he finds the greatest reluctancy thereunto. And every affection is originally sanctified according unto the use it is to be of in the life of holiness and obedience.

To be entire for God, to "follow him fully," to "cleave unto him with purpose of heart," to have the "heart circumcised to love him," is to have all our affections renewed and sanctified; without which we can do none of them. When it is otherwise, there is a "double heart," "a heart and a heart," which he abhors: "Their heart is divided; now shall they be found faulty," Hosea x. 2.

So it is in the other change mentioned. Whatever is or may be wrought upon our affections when they are not spiritually renewed, *that very change, as unto the extent of it, is not universal.* It doth not affect the whole mind, in all its powers and affections, until a vital, prevailing principle and habit of grace is implanted in the soul. Sin will not only radically adhere unto all the faculties, powers, and affections, but it will, under any change that may befall them, refer the rule and dominion in some of them unto itself. So was it with the young man that came unto our Lord Jesus Christ to know what he should do to obtain eternal life, Mark x. 17–22.

Thus there are many who in other things are reduced unto moderation, sobriety, and temperance, yet there remaineth in them "the love of money" in a predominant degree; which to them is "the root of all evil," as the apostle speaks. Some "seem to be religious," but they "bridle not their tongues;" through anger, envy, hatred, and the like, "their religion is vain."

The most of men, in their several ways of profession, pretend not only unto religion, but unto zeal in it, yet set no bounds unto their affections unto earthly enjoyments. Some of old, who had most eminently in all other things subdued their passions and affections, were the greatest enemies unto and persecutors of the gospel.

Some who seem to have had a mighty change wrought in them by

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a superstitious devotion, do yet walk in the spirit of Cain towards all the disciples of Christ,—as it is with the principal devotionists of the church of Rome; and elsewhere we may see some go soberly about the persecution and destruction of other Christians. Some will cherish one secret lust or other, which they cannot but know to be pernicious unto their souls. Some love the praise of men, which will never permit them to be truly spiritually minded: so our Saviour testifieth of some, that they "could not believe, because they loved the praise of men." This was the known vice of all the ancient philosophers. They had, many of them, on the principles of reason and by severe exercise, subdued their affections unto great moderation about temporary things, but in the meantime were all of them slaves to vain-glory and the praise of men, until by the public observation of it, and some contradictions in their lives unto their pretences unto virtue, they lost that also among wise and considerative men. And, generally, if men *not spiritually renewed* were able to search themselves, they would find that some of their affections are so far from having any change wrought in them, as that they are a quiet habitation for sin, where it exerciseth its rule and dominion.

[2.] There is a *universality that is objective in spiritual things*, with respect unto the renovation of our affections; that is, affections spiritually renewed do fix themselves upon and cleave unto all spiritual things, in their proper places, and unto their proper ends: for the ground and reason of our adherence unto any one of them is the same with respect unto them all,—that is, their relation unto God in Christ. Wherefore, when our affections are renewed, we make no choice in spiritual things, cleaving unto some and refusing others, making use of Naaman's restraint; but our adherence is the same unto them all in their proper places and degrees. And if, by reason of darkness and ignorance, we know not any of them to be from God,—as, for instance, the observation of the Lord's day,—it is of unspeakable disadvantage unto us. An equal respect is required in us unto all God's commands. Yet there are various distinctions in spiritual things, and thereon a man may and ought to value one above another as unto the degrees of his love and esteem, although he is to be sincere with respect unto them all:—

1*st.* God himself,—that is, as revealed in and by Christ,—is in the first and chiefest place the proper and adequate object of our affections as they are renewed. He is so for himself, or his own sake alone. This is the spring, the centre, and chief object of our love. He that loves not God for himself,—that is, *for what he is in himself*, and what from himself alone *he is and will be unto us in Christ* (which considerations are inseparable),—hath no true affection

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for any spiritual thing whatever. And not a few do here deceive themselves, or are deceived; which should make us the more diligent in the examination of ourselves. They suppose that they love *heaven* and heavenly things, and the duties of divine worship,—which persuasion may befall them on many grounds and occasions which will not endure the trial,—but as unto *God himself*, they can give no evidence that they have any love to him, either on the account of the glorious excellencies of his nature, with their natural relation unto him and dependence on him, or on the account of the *manifestation of himself in Christ*, and the exercise of his grace therein. But whatever may be pretended, there is no love unto God whereof these things are not the formal reason, that proceeds not from these springs. And because all men pretend that they love God, and defy them that think them so vile as not to do so, though they live in open enmity against him and hatred of him, it becomes us strictly to examine ourselves on what grounds we pretend so to do. Is it because indeed we see an excellency, a beauty, a desirableness, in the glorious properties of his nature, such as our souls are refreshed and satisfied with the thoughts of, by faith, and in whose enjoyment our blessedness will consist, so that we always rejoice at the remembrance of his holiness? Is it our great joy and satisfaction that God is what he is? Is it from the glorious manifestation that he hath made of himself and all his holy excellencies in Christ, with the communication of himself unto us in and by him? If it be so indeed, then is our love generous and gracious, from the renovation of our affections. But if we say we love God, yet truly know not why, or upon principles of education, and because it is esteemed the height of wickedness to do otherwise, we shall be at a loss when we are called unto our trial. This is the first object of our affections.

2*dly*. In other spiritual things, renewed affections do cleave unto them *according as God is in them*. God alone is loved for himself; all other things for him, in the measure and degree of his presence in them. This alone gives them pre-eminence in renewed affections. For instance, God is in Christ, in the human nature of the man Christ Jesus, in a way and manner singular, in concern alike, incomprehensible, so as he is in the same kind in nothing else. Therefore is the Lord Christ, even as unto his human nature, the object of our affections in such a way and degree as no other thing, spiritual or eternal, but God himself, is or ought to be. All other spiritual things become so from the presence of God in them, and from the degree of that presence have they their nature and use. Accordingly are they, or ought to be, the object of our affections as unto the degree of their exercise. Evidences of the presence of God in things and persons are the only attractives of renewed affections.

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3dly. In those things which seem to *stand in an equality* as unto what is of God in them, yet on some especial occasions and reasons our love may go forth eminently unto one more than another. Some particular truth, with the grace communicated by it, may have been the means of our conversion unto God, of our edification in an especial manner, of our consolation in distress; it cannot be but that the mind will have a peculiar respect unto and valuation of such truths and the grace administered by them. And so it is as unto duties. We may have found such a lively intercourse and communion with God in some of them as may give us a peculiar delight in them.

But, notwithstanding these differences, affections spiritually renewed do cleave unto all spiritual things *as such;* for the true formal reason of their so doing is the same in them all,—namely, God in them: only they have several ways of acting themselves towards them, whereof I shall give one instance.

Our Saviour distributes spiritual things into those that are *heavenly* and those that are *earthly*, that is comparatively so: John iii. 12, "If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things?"

The "heavenly things" are the deep and mysterious counsels of the will of God. These renewed affections cleave unto with holy admiration and satisfactory submission, captivating the understanding unto what it cannot comprehend. So the apostle declares it, Rom. xi. 33–36, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor? or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen." What the mind cannot comprehend the heart doth admire and adore, delighting in God, and giving glory unto him in all.

The "earthly things" intended by our Saviour in that place are the work of God upon the souls of men in their regeneration, wrought here in the earth. Toward these the affections act themselves with delight and with great thanksgiving. The experience of the grace of God in and upon believers is sweet unto their souls. But one way or other they cleave unto them all; they have not a prevailing aversation unto any of them. They have a regard unto all God's precepts, a delight in all his counsels, a love to himself and all his ways.

Whatever other change is wrought on the affections, if they be not spiritually renewed, it is not so with them; for as they do not cleave unto any spiritual things, in their own true proper nature, in a due manner, because of the evidences of the presence of God in them, so

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there are always some of them whereunto those whose affections are not renewed do maintain an aversation and an enmity. And although this frame doth not instantly discover itself, yet it will do so upon any especial trial. So was it with the hearers of our Saviour, John vi. There was a great impression made on their affections by what he taught them concerning "the bread of God, which came down from heaven and gave life unto the world;" for they cried thereon, "Lord, evermore give us this bread," verse 34: but when the mystery of it was farther explained unto them, they liked it not, but cried, "This is an hard saying, who can hear it?" verse 60; and thereon fell off both from him and his doctrine, although they had followed him so long as to be esteemed his disciples, verse 66. I say, therefore, whensoever men's affections are not renewed, whatever other change may have been wrought upon them, as they have no true delight in any spiritual things or truths for themselves and in their own nature, so there are some instances wherein they will maintain their natural enmity and aversation unto them.

This is the first difference between affections spiritually renewed and those which, from any other causes, may have some kind of change wrought in them.

CHAPTER XIV.

The second difference between affections spiritually renewed and those which have been only changed by light and conviction—Grounds and reasons of men's delight in duties of divine worship, and of their diligence in their performance, whose minds are not spiritually renewed.

THE second difference lieth herein, that *there may be a change in the affections, wherein men may have delight in the duties of religious worship and diligence in their observance; but it is the spiritual renovation of the affections that gives delight in God through Christ, in any duty of religious worship whatever.*

Where the truth of the gospel is known and publicly professed, there is great variety in the minds, ways, and practices, of men about the duties of religious worship. Many are *profane* in their minds and lives, who, *practically* at *least*, despise or wholly neglect the observance of them. These are stout-hearted and far from righteousness, Tit. i. 16. Some attend unto them *formally* and *cursorily*, from the principles of their education, and, it may be, out of some convictions they have of their necessity. But many there are who, in *the way they choose* and are pleased withal, are diligent in their observance, and that with great delight, who yet give no evidence

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of the spiritual renovation of their minds; yea, the way whereby some express their devotion in them, being superstitious and idolatrous, is inconsistent with that or any other saving grace. This, therefore, we must diligently inquire into, or search into *the grounds and reasons of men's delight in divine worship*, according unto their convictions of the way of it, [while they] yet continue in their minds altogether unrenewed. And,—

1. Men may be greatly affected with the *outward part of divine worship*, and the manner of the performance thereof, who have no delight in what is internal, real, and spiritual therein: John v. 35, "He was a burning and a shining light: and ye were willing for a season to rejoice in his light." So, many were delighted in the preaching of Ezekiel, because of his eloquence and the elegancy of his parables, chap. xxxiii. 31, 32. This gave them both delight and diligence in hearing, whereon they called themselves the people of God, though they continued to live in sin; their hearts went after covetousness. The same may befall many at present with reference unto the spiritual gifts of those by whom the word of God is dispensed. I deny not but that men may be more delighted, more satisfied, with the gifts, the preaching, of one than another, and yet be sincere in their delight in the dispensation of the word; for they may find more spiritual advantage thereby than in the gifts of others, and things so prepared as to be more suited unto their edification than elsewhere: but that which at present we insist on hath respect only unto some outward circumstances, pleasing the minds of men, 2 Tim. iii. 5.

This was principally evident under the old testament, whilst they had carnal ordinances and a worldly sanctuary. Ofttimes under that dispensation the people were given up unto all sorts of idolatry and superstition; and when they were not so, yet were the body of them carnal and unholy, as is evident from the whole tract of God's dealing with them, by his prophets and in his providences: yet had they great delight in the outward solemnities of their worship, placing all their trust of acceptance with God therein. They who did really and truly believe looked through them all unto Christ, whom they did foresignify, without which the things were a yoke unto them and a burden almost insupportable, Acts xv. 10; but those who were carnal delighted in the things themselves, and for their sakes rejected Him who was the life and substance of them all. And this proved the great means of the apostasy of the Christian church also: for, to maintain some appearance of spiritual affections, men introduced carnal incitations of them into evangelical worship, such as singing, with music and pompous ceremonies; for they find such things needful to reconcile the worship of God unto their minds and affections, and through them they appear to have great delight

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therein. Could some men but in their thoughts separate divine service from that outward order, those methods of variety, show, and melody, wherewith they are affected, they would have no delight in it, but look upon it as a thing that must be endured. How can it be otherwise conceived of among the Papists? They will with much earnestness, many evidences of devotion, sometimes with difficulty and danger, repair unto their solemn worship, and when they are present understand not one word whereby their minds might be excited unto the real actings of faith, love, and delight in God! Only order, ceremony, music, and other incentives of carnal affections, make great impression on them. Affections spiritually renewed are not concerned in these things; yea, if those in whom they are should be engaged in the use of them, they would find them means of diverting their minds from the proper work of divine worship, rather than an advantage therein. It will also appear so unto themselves, unless they are content to lose their spiritual affections, acting themselves in faith and love, embracing in their stead a carnal, imaginary devotion. Hence, two persons may at the same time attend unto the same ordinances of divine worship, with equal delight, on very distinct principles: as if two men should come into the same garden, planted and adorned with a variety of herbs and flowers, one ignorant of the nature of them, the other a skilful herbalist; both may be equally delighted, the one with the colours and smell of the flowers, the other with the consideration of their various natures, their uses in physical remedies, or the like. So may it be in the hearing of the word. For instance, one may be delighted with the outward administration, another with its spiritual efficacy, at the same time. Hence Austin tells us that singing in the church was laid aside by Athanasius at Alexandria; not the people's singing of psalms, but a kind of singing in the reading of the Scripture and some offices of worship, which began then to be introduced in the church. And the reason he gave why he did it was, that the modulation of the voice and musical tune might not divert the minds of men from that spiritual affection which is required of them in sacred duties. What there is of real order in the worship of God,—as there is that order which is an effect of divine wisdom,—it is suited and useful unto spiritual affections, because proceeding from the same Spirit whereby they are internally renewed: "Beholding your order," Col. ii. 5. Every thing of God's appointment is both helpful and delightful unto them. None can say with higher raptures of admiration, "How amiable are thy tabernacles, O LORD of hosts!" Ps. lxxxiv. 1, 2, than they whose affections are renewed; yet is not their delight terminated on them, as we shall see immediately.

2. *Men may be delighted in the performance of outward duties*

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of divine worship, because in them they comply with and give some kind of satisfaction unto their convictions. When conscience is awakened unto a sense of the necessity of such duties,—namely, of those wherein divine worship doth consist,—it will give the mind no rest or peace in the neglect of them. Let them be attended unto in the seasons which light, conviction, and custom call for, it will be so far satisfied as that the mind shall find present ease and refreshment in it. And when the soul is wonted unto this relief, it will not only be diligent in the performance of such duties, it will not only not omit them, but it will delight in them as those which bring it in great advantage. Hence many will not omit the duty of prayer every morning, who upon the matter are resolved to live in sin all the day long. And there are but few who sedulously endeavour to live and walk in the frame of their hearts and ways answerable unto their own prayers; yet all that is in our prayers beyond our endeavours to answer it in a conformity of heart and life, is but the exercise of gifts in answer to convictions. Others find an allay of troubles in them, like that which sick persons may find by drinking cold water in a fever, whose flames are assuaged for a season by it. They make them as an antidote against the poison and sting of sin, which allayeth its rage but cannot expel its venom.

Or these duties are unto them *like the sacrifices for sin under the law.* They gave a guilty person present ease: but, as the apostle speaks, they made not men perfect; they took not away utterly a conscience condemning for sin. Presently, on the first omission of duty, a sense of sin again returned on them, and that not only as the fact, but as the person himself, was condemned by the law. Then were the sacrifices to be repeated, for a renewed propitiation. This gave that carnal people such delight and satisfaction in those sacrifices that they trusted unto them for righteousness, life, and salvation. So it is with persons who are constant in spiritual duties merely from conviction. The performance of those duties gives them a present relief and ease; though it heals not their wound, it assuageth their pain and dispelleth their present fears. Hence are they frequent in them, and that ofttimes not without delight, because they find ease thereby. And their condition is somewhat dangerous who, upon the sense of the guilt of any sin, do betake themselves for relief unto their prayers, which having discharged, they are much at ease in their minds and consciences, although they have obtained no real sense of the pardon of sin nor any strength against it.

It will be said, "Do not all men, the best of men, perform *all spiritual duties out of a conviction of their necessity?* do not they know it would be their sin to omit them, and so find satisfaction in their minds upon their performance?" I say, They do: but it is one

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thing to perform a duty out of conviction of a necessity as it is God's ordinance, which conviction respects only the duty itself; another thing to perform it to give satisfaction unto convictions of other sins, or to quiet conscience under its trouble about them; which latter we speak unto. This begins and ends in self; self-satisfaction is the sole design of it. By it men aim at some rest and quietness in their own minds, which otherwise they cannot attain. But in the performance of duties in faith, from a conviction of their necessity as God's ordinance, and their use in the way of his grace, the soul begins and ends in God. It seeks no satisfaction *in them*, nor finds it *from them*, but in and from God alone *by them*.

3. The principal reason why men whose affections are only changed, not spiritually renewed, do delight in holy duties of divine worship, is, because *they place their righteousness before God in them*, whereon they hope to be accepted with him. They know not, they seek not after, any other righteousness but what is of their own working out. Whatever notions they may have of the righteousness of faith, of *the righteousness of Christ*, that which they practically trust unto is *their own:* and it discovers itself so to be in their own consciences on every trial that befalls them; yea, when they cry unto the Lord, and pretend unto faith in Christ, they quickly make it evident that their principal trust is resolved into themselves. Now, in all that they can plead in a way of duties or obedience, nothing carrieth a fairer pretence unto a righteousness than what they do in the worship of God, and the exercise of the acts of religion towards him. This is that which he expects at their hands, what is due unto him in the light of their consciences, the best that they can do to please him; which therefore they must put their trust in, or nothing. They secretly suppose not only that there is a righteousness in these things which will answer for itself, but such also as will make compensation in some measure for their sins; and therefore, whereas they cannot but frequently fall into sin, they relieve themselves from the reflection of their consciences *by a multiplication of duties*, and renewed diligence in them.

It is inconceivable what delight and satisfaction men will take in any thing that seems to contribute so much unto a righteousness of their own; for it is suitable unto and pleaseth all the principles of nature as corrupt, after it is brought under the power of a conviction concerning sin, righteousness, and judgment.

This made the Jews of old so pertinaciously adhere unto the ceremonies and sacrifices of the law, and to prefer them above the gospel, "the kingdom of God, and the righteousness thereof," Rom x. 3. They looked and sought for righteousness by them. Those who for many generations were kept up with great difficulty unto any tole-

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rable observance of them, when they had learned to place all their hopes of a righteousness in them, would and did adhere unto them unto their temporal and eternal ruin, Rom. ix. 31–33. And when men were persuaded that righteousness was to be attained by works of munificence and supposed charity, in the dedication of their substance unto the use of the church, they who otherwise were covetous, and greedy, and oppressing, would lavish gold out of the bag, and give up their whole patrimony, with all their ill-gotten goods, to attain it; so powerful an influence hath the desire of self-righteousness upon the minds of men. It is the best fortification of the soul against Christ and the gospel,—the last reserve whereby it maintains the interest of self against the grace of God.

Hence, I say, those that place their righteousness, or that which is the principal part of it, in the duties of religious worship, will not only be diligent in them, but ofttimes abound in a multiplication of them. Especially will they do so if they may be performed in such a way and manner as pleaseth their affections with a show of humility and devotion, requiring nothing of the exercise of faith or sincere divine love therein. So is it with many in all kinds of religion, whether the way of their worship be true or false, whether it be appointed of God or rejected by him. And the declaration hereof is the subject of the discourse of the prophet, Isa. i. 11–17; also, Mic. vi. 6–8.

4. *The reputation of devotion in religious duties* may insensibly affect the unrenewed minds of men with great diligence and delight in their performance. However men are divided in their apprehension and practice about religion, however different from and contrary unto each other their ways of divine worship are; yet it is amongst all sorts of men, yea, in the secret thoughts of them who outwardly contemn these things, a matter of reputation to be devout, to be diligent, to be strict, in and about those duties of religion which, according to their own light and persuasion, they judge incumbent on them. This greatly affects the minds of men whilst pride is secretly predominant in them, and they love the praise of men more than the praise of God.

Especially will this consideration prevail on them when they suppose that *the credit and honour of the way which they profess*, in competition with others, depend much on their reputation as to their strictness in duties of devotion; for then will they not only be diligent in themselves, but zealous in drawing others unto the same observances. These two principles, their own reputation and that of their sect, constituted the life and soul of Pharisaism of old. According as the minds of men are influenced with these apprehensions, so will a love unto and a delight in those duties whereby their reputation is attained thrive and grow in them.

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I am far from apprehending that any men are (at least, I speak not of them who are) such *vile hypocrites* as to do all that they do in religion to be seen and praised of men, being influenced in all public duties thereby; which some among the Pharisees were given up unto. But I speak of them who, being under the convictions and motives before mentioned, do also yet give admittance unto this corrupt end of desire of reputation or the praise of men; for every such end, being admitted and prevalent in the mind, will universally influence the affections unto a delight in those duties whereby that end may be attained, until the person with whom it is so be habituated unto them with great satisfaction.

5. I should, in the last place, insist on *superstition*. As this is an undue fear of the divine nature, will, and operations, built on false notions and apprehensions of them, it may befall the minds of men in all religions, true and false. It is an internal vice of the mind. As it respects the outward way and means of religious service, and consists in the devout performance of such duties as God indeed accepts not, but forbids, so it belongs only to religion as it is false and corrupt. How in both respects it will engage the minds of men into the performance of religious duties, and for the most part with the most scrupulous diligence, and sometimes with prodigious attempts to exceed the measures of human nature in what they do design, is too long a work here to be declared. It may suffice to have mentioned it among the causes and reasons why men whose affections are not spiritually renewed may yet greatly delight in the diligent performance of the outward duties of religion. Our design in these things is, the discovery of the true nature of this grace and duty of being spiritually minded. Hereunto we have declared that it is necessary that our affections be spiritually and supernaturally renewed; and because there may be a great change wrought on the affections of men with respect unto spiritual things where there is nothing of this supernatural renovation, our present inquiry is, What are the differences that are between the actings of the affections of the one sort and of the other, whether spiritually renewed or occasionally changed? And whereas the great exercise of them consists in the duties of religious worship, I have declared what are the grounds and reasons whence men of unrenewed minds do delight ofttimes in the duties of divine worship and are diligent in the performance of them.

From these and the like considerations, it may be made manifest that the greatest part of the devotion that is in the world doth not spring from the spiritual renovation of the minds of men; without which it is not accepted with God. That which remains to give in instance, farther evidence unto the discovery we are in the pursuit

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of, is, what are the grounds and reasons whereon those whose minds and affections are spiritually renewed do delight in the institutions of divine worship, and attend unto their observance with great heed and diligence. And because this is an inquiry of great importance, and is of great use to be stated in other cases as well as that before us, I shall treat of it by itself in the ensuing chapter, that the reader may the more distinctly comprehend it, both in the nature of the doctrine concerning it and in the place it holds in our present discourse.

CHAPTER XV.

Delight of believers in the holy institutions of divine worship—The grounds and reasons thereof—The evidence of being spiritually minded thereby, etc.

THAT all *true believers*, whose minds are spiritually renewed, have a singular delight in all the institutions and ordinances of divine worship is fully evident, both in the examples of the saints in the Scripture and their own experience, which they will never forego; for this hath been the greatest cause of their suffering persecution, and martyrdom itself, in all ages. If the primitive Christians under the power of the pagan emperors, or the witnesses for Christ under the antichristian apostasy, would or could have omitted the observance of them (according to the advice and practice of the Gnostics), they might have escaped the rage of their adversaries. But they loved not their lives in comparison unto that delight which they had in the observance of the commands of Christ as unto the duties of evangelical worship. David gives us frequently an instance hereof in himself: Ps. xlii. 1–4, "As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God? My tears have been my meat day and night, while they continually say unto me, Where is thy God? When I remember these things, I pour out my soul in me: for I had gone with the multitude, I went with them to the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise, with a multitude that kept holyday." Ps. lxiii. 1–5, "O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is; to see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary. Because thy loving-kindness is better than life, my lips shall praise thee. Thus will I bless thee while I live: I will lift up my hands in thy name My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness; and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips." Ps. lxxxiv. 1–4, "How amiable are thy tabernacles, O LORD of hosts! My soul

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longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the LORD: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God. Yea, the sparrow hath found an house, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, even thine altars, O LORD of hosts, my King, and my God. Blessed are they that dwell in thy house: they will be still praising thee. Selah."

But "a greater than David is here." Our Lord Jesus Christ himself did, upon all occasions, declare his delight in and zeal for all the ordinances of divine worship which were then in force by virtue of divine institution and command; for although he severely reproved and rejected whatever men had added thereunto, under the pretence of a supererogating strictness of outward order, laying it all under that dreadful sentence, "Every plant which my heavenly Father hath not planted shall be plucked up," and so cast into the fire, yet as unto what was of divine appointment, his delight therein was singular, and exemplary unto all his disciples. With respect hereunto was it said of him, that "the zeal of God's house had eaten him up," by reason of the affliction which he had in his spirit to see the worship of it neglected, polluted, and despised. This caused him to cleanse the temple, the seat of divine worship, from the polluters and pollutions of it, not long before his sufferings, in the face and unto the high provocation of all his adversaries. So with earnest desire he longed for the celebration of his last passover: Luke xxii. 15, "With desire have I desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer." And it is a sufficient evidence of the frame of spirit and practice of his disciples afterward, in reference to the duties of evangelical worship by his appointment, that the apostle gives it as an assured token of an unsound condition, and that which tendeth to final, cursed apostasy, when any fall into a neglect of them, Heb. x. 25–27.

These things are manifest and unquestionable. But our present inquiry is only, what it is which believers do so delight in in the ordinances and institutions of divine gospel worship, and what it is that engageth their hearts and minds into a diligent observance of them, as also how and wherein they do exercise their love and delight. And I say, in general, that their delight in all ordinances of divine worship, —as is evident in the testimonies before produced,—is in Christ himself, or God in Christ. This alone is that which they seek after, cleave unto, and are satisfied withal. They make use of the streams, but only as means of communication with the spring. When men are really renewed in the spirit of their minds it is so. Their regard unto ordinances and duties of divine worship is, as they are appointed of God a blessed means of communion and intercourse between himself in Christ and their souls. By them doth Christ communicate

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of his love and grace unto us; in and by them do we act faith and love on him. It is the treasure hid in the field, which when a man hath found he purchaseth the whole field; but it is that he may enjoy the treasure which is hid therein, Matt. xiii. 44. This field is the gospel and all the ordinances of it. This men do purchase sometimes at a dear rate, even with the loss of all they enjoy; but yet if they obtain nothing but the field, they will have little cause to rejoice in their bargain. It is Christ the treasure alone, that pearl of great price, that will eternally enrich the soul. The field is to be used only [so] as to find and dig up the treasure that is in it. It is, I say, Christ alone that, in the preaching of the gospel, renewed affections do cleave unto as the treasure, and unto all other things according as their relation is unto him or as they have a participation of him. Wherefore, in all duties of religion, in all ordinances of worship, their inquiry is after him whom their souls do love, Cant. i. 7.

But yet we must treat more particularly and distinctly of these things. Those whose affections are spiritually renewed do love, adhere unto, and delight in, ordinances of divine service and duties of worship, on the grounds and reasons ensuing:—

1. In general *they do so as they find faith, and love, and delight in God through Christ, excited and acted in and by them.* This is the first and immediate end in their institution. It is a pernicious mistake to suppose that any external duties of worship, as hearing the word, prayer, or the sacraments, are appointed for themselves or accepted for themselves.

Such thoughts the Jews of old had concerning their sacrifices,—namely, that they were appointed for their own sake, and were acceptable service unto God merely on their own account. Wherefore God, to deliver them from this pernicious mistake, affirms oftimes that he never appointed them at all; that is, for any such end, Jer. vii. 22, 23, Isa. i. 12–14, etc. And now, under the gospel, sundry things destructive to the souls of men have proceeded from such a supposition. Some hereon have always satisfied and contented themselves with the external observance of them, without desiring or endeavouring any holy communion with God in them or by them. This constitutes the state and condition mentioned, Rev. iii. 1. And by following this track the generality of Christians do wander out of the way; they cannot leave them, nor do they know how to use them unto their advantage, until they come wholly unto that woful state, Isa. xxix. 13. And some, to establish this deceit, have taught that there is much more in the outward work of these duties than ever God put into them, and that they are sanctified merely by virtue of the work wrought.

But all the duties of the second commandment, as are all insti-

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tuted ordinances of worship, are but means to express and exercise those of the first, as faith, love, fear, trust, and delight in God. The end of them all is, that through them and by them we may act those graces on God in Christ. Where this is not attended unto, when the souls of men do not apply themselves unto this exercise of grace in them, let them be never so solemn as to their outward performance, be attended unto with diligence, be performed with earnestness and delight, they are neither acceptable unto God nor beneficial unto themselves, Isa. i. 11. This, therefore, is the first general spring of the love of believers, of them whose affections are spiritually renewed, unto the ordinances of divine worship, and their delight in them: They have experience that in and by them their faith and love are excited unto a gracious exercise of themselves on God in Christ; and when they find it otherwise with them, they can have no rest in their souls. For this end are they ordained, sanctified, and blessed of God; and therefore are effectual means of it, when their efficacy is not defeated by unbelief.

And those who have no experience hereof in their attendance unto them do, as hath been said, fall into pernicious extremes. Some continue their observance with little regard unto God, in *cursed formality*. So they make them a means of their ruin by countenancing of them in their security. Others utterly reject them, at least the most solemn of them,—and therein both the wisdom, and grace, and authority of God, by whom they are appointed,—because, through the power of their own unbelief, they find nothing in them.

This being the immediate end of all divine institutions; this being the only way whereby we may give glory unto God in their observance, which is their ultimate end in this world; and this being the design in general of believers in that obedience they yield unto the Lord Christ in their diligent observation of them,—we may consider how, in what way, and by what means, those whose affections are spiritually renewed do and ought to apply their minds and souls unto their observance. And we may consider herein, first, what they do *design*, and then what they endeavour to be found in the exercise and *practice* of in their use and enjoyment:—

(1.) They come unto them with this desire, design, and expectation,—namely, to be enabled, directed, and excited by them unto *the exercise of divine faith and love*. When it is not so with any, where there is not this design, they do in various degrees take the name of God in vain in their observance. These are "approximationes Dei," the "ways of drawing nigh unto God," as they are everywhere called in Scripture. To suppose that a drawing nigh unto God may consist merely in the outward performance of duty, whatever be its solemnity, is to reject all due reverence of him. "Forasmuch

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much," saith the Lord, "as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, therefore, behold, I will proceed against them," Isa. xxix. 13, 14. The mouth and lips are put, by a synecdoche, for all the means of outward worship and honour. These men may use, diligently attend unto, whilst their hearts are far from God,—that is, when they do not draw nigh to him by faith and love; but all this worship is rejected of God with the highest tokens of his displeasure and indignation against it.

Our souls, then, have no way of approach unto God in duties of worship *but by faith;* no way of adherence or cleaving unto him *but by love;* no way of abiding in him *but by fear, reverence, and delight.* Whenever these are not in exercise, outward duties of worship are so far from being a means of such an approach unto him, as that they set us at a greater distance from him than we were before; at least they are utterly useless and fruitless unto us. So, indeed, they are unto the most who come unto them they know not why, and behave themselves under them they care not how; nor is there any evil in the hearts and ways of men whereof God complaineth more in his word, as that which is accompanied with the highest contempt of him. And because these ordinances of divine worship are means which the wisdom and grace of God hath appointed unto this end, namely, the exercise and increase of divine faith and love, and therefore doth sanctify and bless them thereunto, I do not believe that they have any delight in the exercise of these graces, nor do design growth in them, by whom these great means of them are despised or neglected.

And although I have seen those valleys of public worship forsaken, either on pretences of higher attainments in faith, light, and love, than to stand in need of them any more; or on a foolish opinion that they cease upon the dispensation of the Spirit, which is given unto us to make them useful and effectual; or on some provocations that have been given unto some men, or which they have taken unto themselves, which they have thought they could revenge by a neglect of public administrations; or through slavish peace and negligence in times of difficulty, as is the manner of some who forsake the assemblies of the saints, Heb. x. 25;—yet I never saw but it issued in a great decay, if not in an utter loss, of all exercise of faith and love, and sometimes in open profaneness: for such persons contemn the way and means which God, in his infinite wisdom and goodness, hath appointed for their exercise and increase, and this shall not prosper. We may therefore do well to consider that the principal way whereby we may sanctify the name of God in all duties of his worship, and obtain the benefit of them to our own souls, is by a con-

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scientious approach unto them, with a holy desire and design to be found in the exercise of faith and love on God in Christ, and to be helped and guided therein by them.

To be under an efficacious influence from this design is the best preparation for any duty. So David expresseth his delight in the worship of God: "How amiable are thy tabernacles, O LORD of hosts! My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the LORD: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God," Ps. lxxxiv. 1, 2. He longed for the tabernacle and the courts of it; but it was the enjoyment of God himself, the living God, that he desired and sought after. This was that which made him so fervent in his desires after those ordinances of God. So he expresseth it, Ps. lxiii. 2, "To see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary." David had had great communion with and delight in God, by faith and love, in the solemn duties of his worship; and this was that which inflamed him with desires after renewed opportunities unto the same end.

(2.) This design is not *general, inactive, useless,* and *slothful;* but such persons diligently endeavour, in the use of these ordinances and attendance unto them, to be found in the exercise of these graces. They have not only an antecedent design to be so, but a diligent actual endeavour after it, not suffering their minds by any thing to be diverted from the pursuit of that design, Eccles. v. 1. Whatever is not quickened and enlivened hereby they esteem utterly lost. Neither outward administrations nor order will give them satisfaction when these things are wanting in themselves. Without the internal actings of the life of faith, external administrations of ordinances of worship are but dead things, nor can any believer obtain real satisfaction in them or refreshment by them without an inward experience of faith and love in them and by them; and it is that which, if we are wise, we shall continually attend unto the consideration of. A watchful Christian will be careful lest he lose any one duty by taking up with the carcass of it. And the danger of so doing is not small. Our affections are renewed but in part; and as they are still liable to be diverted and seduced from spirituality in duty even by things earthly and carnal, through the corruption that remaineth in them, so there is a disposition abiding in them to be pleased with those external things and religious duties which others, as we have showed before, who are no way graciously renewed, do satisfy themselves withal. The grace and oratory of the speaker in preaching of the word, especially in these days wherein the foppery of fine language, even in sacred things, is so much extolled; the order and circumstances of other duties; with inclination and love unto a party,—are apt to insinuate themselves with great complacency into our affections so far as they are unrenewed.

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And these things discover the true grounds whence it is that the ordinances of divine worship are so useless as they are to many who seem to attend unto them with diligence. They may be referred unto these three heads:—[1.] They do not come unto them as the means appointed of God for *the exercise of faith and love unto Christ*, so as to make it their design in their approaches to them; without which all that is spoken of advantage in and by other duties is utterly lost. [2.] They do not, in and under them, labour to *stir up faith and love* unto their due exercise. [3.] They suffer their minds to be *diverted from the exercise of these graces*, partly by occasional temptations, partly by attendance unto what is *outward only* in the ordinances themselves.

Spiritual affections find no place of rest in any of these things. Such proposals of God in Christ, of his will and their own duty, as may draw out their faith, love, godly fear, and delight, into their due exercise, are that which they inquire after and acquiesce in.

Two things alone doth faith regard in all duties of worship, as unto the outward administration of it,—the one *absolutely*, the other *comparatively*,—both with respect unto the ends mentioned, or the exercise, growth, and increase of grace in us. The first is, that they may be of divine appointment. Where their original and observance are resolved into divine authority, there, and there alone, will they have a divine efficacy. In all these things faith hath regard to nothing but divine precepts and promises. Whatever hath regard to any thing else is not faith, but fancy; and therefore those uncommanded duties in religion, which so abound in the papal church as that if not the whole yet all the principal parts of their worship consist in them, are such as in whose discharge it is impossible faith should be in a due exercise. That which it hath *comparative respect* unto is, the spiritual gifts of them unto whom the administration of the ordinances of the gospel in the public worship of the church is committed. With respect unto them, believers may have more delight and satisfaction in the ministry of one than of another, as was touched before. But this is not because one is more learned than another or more elegant than another, hath more ability of speech than another or more fervency in utterance than another, is more fervent or earnest in his delivery; but because they find the gifts of one more suited and more effectual to stir up faith and love unto a holy exercise in their minds and hearts than what they find in some others. Hence they have a peculiar value for and delight in the ministry of such persons, especially when they can enjoy it in due order, and without the offence of others. And ministers that are wise will, in holy administrations, neglect all other things, and attend unto this alone,

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how they may be helpful unto the faith, and love, and joy of believers, so far as they are the object of their ministry.

This is the first reason and ground whereon affections spiritually renewed cleave unto ordinances of divine worship with delight and satisfaction,—namely, because they are the means appointed and blessed of God for the exercise and increase of faith and love, with an experience of their efficacy unto that end.

2. The second is, *because they are the means of the communication of a sense of divine love and supplies of divine grace unto the souls of them that do believe.* So far as our affections are renewed, this is the most principal attractive to cleave unto them with delight and complacency.

They are, as was observed before, the ways of our approaching unto God. Now, we do not draw nigh to God, as himself speaks, as to a "dry heath or a barren wilderness," where no refreshment is to be obtained. To make a pretence of coming unto God, and not with expectation of receiving good and great things from him, is to despise God himself, to overthrow the nature of the duty, and deprive our own souls of all benefit thereby. And want hereof is that which renders the worship of the most useless and fruitless unto themselves. We are always to come unto God as unto an eternal spring of goodness, grace, and mercy, of all that our souls do stand in need of, of all we can desire in order unto our everlasting blessedness. And all these things, as unto believers, may be reduced unto the two heads before mentioned:—

(1.) They come for *a communication of a sense of his love in Jesus Christ.* Hence doth all our peace, consolation, and joy, all our encouragement to do and suffer according to the will of God, all our supportments under our sufferings, solely depend; in these things do our souls live; and without them we are of all men the most miserable.

It is the Holy Spirit who is the immediate efficient cause of all these things in us. He "sheds abroad the love of God in our hearts," Rom. v. 5; he witnesseth our adoption unto us, chap. viii. 15, 16; and thereby an interest in the love of the Father, in God as he is love. But the outward way and means whereby he ordinarily communicates these things unto us, and effects them in us, is by the dispensation of the gospel, or the preaching of it. He doth the same work also in prayer, and ofttimes in other holy administrations. For this end, for a participation of this grace, of these mercies, do believers come unto God by them. They use them as means to "draw water from the wells of salvation," and to receive in that spiritual sense of divine love which God by them will communicate.

So Christ by his word knocks at the door of the heart. If it be

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opened by faith, he cometh in and suppeth with men, giving them a gracious refreshment, by the testimony of his own love and the love of the Father, Rev. iii. 20; John xiv. 23. This believers look for in, and this they do in various measures receive by, the ordinances of divine worship. And although some, through their fears and temptations, are not sensible hereof, yet do they secretly receive those blessed, gracious supplies whereby their souls are held in life, without which they would pine away and perish. So he dealeth with them, Cant. iv. 5, 6. These are the gardens and galleries of Christ, wherein he gives us of his love, Cant. vii. 12. Those who are humble and sincere know how often their souls have been refreshed in them, and how long sometimes the impressions they have received of divine grace and love have continued with them, unto their unspeakable consolation. They remember what they have received in the opening and application of the "exceeding great and precious promises" that are given unto them, whereby they are gradually more and more "made partakers of the divine nature,"—how many a time they have received light in darkness, refreshment under despondencies, relief in their conflicts with dangers and temptations, in and by them. For this cause do affections that are spiritually renewed cleave unto them. Who can but love and delight in that which he hath found by experience to be the way and means of communicating unto him the most invaluable mercy, the most inestimable benefit, whereof in this life he can be made partaker? He who hath found a hidden treasure, although he should at once take away the whole of it, will yet esteem the place where he found it; but if it be of that nature that no more can be found or taken of it at once but what is sufficient for the present occasion, yet is so full and boundless as that whenever he comes again to seek for it he shall be sure to obtain present supply, he will always value it, and constantly apply himself unto it. And such is the treasure of grace and divine love that is in the ordinances of divine worship.

If we are strangers unto these things, if we have never received *efficacious intimations of divine love* unto our souls in and by the duties of divine worship, we cannot love them and delight in them as we ought. What do men come to hear the word of God for? What do they pray for? What do they expect to receive from him? Do they come unto God as the eternal fountain of living waters,—as the God of all grace, peace, and consolation? or do they come unto his worship without any design, as unto a dry and empty show? Do they fight uncertainly with these things, as men beating the air? or do they think they bring something unto God, but receive nothing from him? that the best of their business is to please him in doing what he commands, but to receive any thing from him they expect

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not, nor do ever examine themselves whether they have done so or no? It is not for persons who walk in such ways ever to attain a due delight in the ordinances of divine worship.

Believers have other designs herein; and among the rest this in the first place, that they may be afresh *made partakers of refreshing, comforting pledges of the love of God in Christ*, and thereby of their adoption, of the pardon of their sins, and acceptance of their persons. According as they meet with these things in the duties of holy worship, public or private, so will they love, value, and adhere unto them. Some men are full of other thoughts and affections, so as that these things are not their principal design or desire, or are contented with that measure of them which they suppose themselves to have attained, or at least are not sensible of the need they stand in to have fresh communications of them made unto their souls, supposing that they can do well enough without a renewed sense of divine love every day. Some are so ignorant of what they ought to design, to look after, in the duties of gospel worship, as that it is impossible they should have any real design in them. Many of the better sort of professors are too negligent in this matter. They do not long and pant in the inward man after renewed pledges of the love of God; they do not consider how much need they have of them, that they may be encouraged and strengthened unto all other duties of obedience; they do not prepare their minds for the reception of them, nor come with expectation of their communication unto them; they do not rightly fix their faith on this truth,—namely, that these holy administrations and duties are appointed of God in the first place as the ways and means of conveying his love and a sense of it unto our souls. From hence spring all that lukewarmness, coldness, and indifferency in and unto the duties of holy worship, that are growing among us; for if men have lost the principal design of faith in them, and disesteem the chiefest benefit which is to be obtained by them, whence should zeal for them, delight in them, or diligence in attendance unto them, arise? Let not any please themselves under the power of such decays; they are indications of their inward frame, and those infallible! Such persons will grow cold, careless, and negligent, as unto the duties of public worship; they will put themselves neither to charge nor trouble about them; every occasion of life diverts them, and finds ready entertainment in their minds; and when they do attend upon them, it is with great indifference and unconcernedness. Yet would they have it thought that all is still as well within as ever it was; they have as good a respect unto religion as any! But these things openly discover an ulcerous disease in the very souls of men, as evidently as if it were written on their foreheads. Whatever they pretend unto the contrary, they are under the power

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of woful decays from all due regard unto spiritual and eternal things. And I would avoid the society of such persons as those who carry an infectious disease about them, unless it were to help on their cure.

But herein it is that affections spiritually renewed do manifest themselves: When we do delight in and value the duties of God's worship, because we find by experience that they are and have been unto us means of communicating a sense and renewed pledges of the love of God in Christ, with all the benefits and privileges which depend thereon, then are our affections renewed in and by the Holy Ghost.

(2.) *They come for supplies of internal, sanctifying, strengthening grace.* This is the second great design of believers in their approaches unto God in his worship. The want hereof, as unto measures and degrees, they find in themselves, and are sensible of it; yea, herein lies the great burden of the souls of believers in this world. All that we do in the life of God may be referred unto two heads:—[1.] *The observance of all duties of obedience;* and, [2.] *The conflict with and conquest over temptations.*

About these things are we continually exercised. Hence the great thing which we desire, labour for, and pant after, is spiritual strength and ability for the discharge of ourselves in a due manner with respect unto these things. This is that which every true believer groaneth after in the inward man, and which he preferreth infinitely above all earthly things. So he may have grace sufficient in any competent measure for these ends, let what will befall him, he desireth no more in this world. God in Christ is the only fountain of all this grace; there is not one drachm of it to be obtained but from him alone. And as he doth communicate it unto us of his own sovereign goodness and pleasure, so the ordinary way and means whereby he will do it are the duties of his worship: Isa. xl. 28–31, "Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding. He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: but they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; they shall walk, and not faint."

All grace and spiritual strength is originally seated in the nature of God, verse 28. But what relief can that afford unto us who are weak, feeble, fainting? He will act suitably unto his nature in the communication of this grace and power, verse 29. But how shall we have an interest in this grace, in these operations? Wait on him in the ordinances of his worship, verse 31. The word as preached

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is the food of our souls, whereby God administereth growth and strength unto them, John xvii. 17. "Desire," says he, "the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby." But what encouragement have we thereunto? "If so be," saith he, "ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious," 1 Pet. ii. 2, 3. If, in and by the dispensation of this word, you have had experience of the grace, the goodness, the kindness of God unto your souls, you cannot but desire it and delight in it; and otherwise you will not do so. When men have sat some good while under the dispensation of the word and in the enjoyment of other ordinances, without tasting in them and by them that "the Lord is gracious," they will grow weary of it and them. Wherefore, prayer is the way of his appointment for the application of our souls unto him to obtain a participation of all needful grace; which, therefore, he has proposed unto us in the promises of the covenant, that we may know what to ask, and how to plead for it. In the sacraments the same promises are sealed unto us, and the grace represented in them effectually exhibited. Meditation confirms our souls in the exercise of faith about it, and is the especial opening of the heart unto the reception of it. By these means, I say, doth God communicate all supplies of renewing, strengthening, and sanctifying grace unto us, that we may live unto him in all holy obedience, and be able to get the victory over our temptations. Under this apprehension do believers approach unto God in the ordinances of his worship. They come unto them as the means of God's communication unto their souls. Hence they cleave unto them with delight, so far as their affections are renewed. So the spouse testifieth of herself, "I sat down under his shadow with great delight," Cant. ii. 3. In these ordinances is the protecting, refreshing presence of Christ. This she rested in with great delight.

3. As *they come unto them with these designs and expectations, so they have experience of the spiritual benefits and advantages which they receive by them, which more and more engageth them unto them in their affections with delight.* All these things, those who have a change wrought in their affections, but not a spiritual renovation, are strangers unto. They neither have the design before mentioned in coming to them, nor the experience of this efficacy now proposed in their attendance on them. But these benefits are great: as, for instance, when men find the worth and effect of the word preached on their souls, in its enlightening, refreshing, strengthening, transforming power; when they find their hearts warmed, their graces excited and strengthened, the love of God improved, their desponding spirits under trials and temptations relieved, their whole souls gradually more and more conformed unto Christ; when they find themselves by it extricated out of snares, doubts, fears,

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temptations, and brought unto sanctification and rest,—they cannot but delight in the dispensation of it, and rejoice in it as the food of their souls. And it is a great hinderance unto the increase of spiritual life, and obstruction unto fruitfulness, thankfulness, and consolation, when we are negligent in our meditation about the benefits that we receive by the word and the advantages which we have thereby; for whilst it is so with us, we can neither value the grace of God in granting this inestimable privilege nor perform any duty with respect unto it in a right manner. This renders it an especial object of our affections as spiritually renewed. That secret love unto, and heavenly delight in, the statutes and testimonies of God, which David expresseth Ps. cxix., arose from the spiritual benefit and advantage which he received by them, as he constantly declares. And the sole reason, on the other hand, why men grow so careless, negligent, and cold, in their attendance unto the preaching of the word, is because they have no experience of any spiritual benefit or advantage by it. They have been brought unto it by one means or another,—mostly by conviction of their duty; their minds have been variously affected with it, unto a joy in the hearing of it and readiness unto sundry duties of obedience: but after a while, when a sense of those temporary impressions is worn off, finding no real spiritual benefit by it, they lose all delight in it, and become very indifferent as unto its enjoyment. The frame which such persons at length arrive unto is described, Mal. i. 13, and iii. 14. None can give any greater evidence of the decay of all manner of grace in them, or of their being destitute of all saving grace, than when they apostatize from some degree of zeal for, and delight in, the dispensation of the word of God, into such a cursed indifferency as many are overtaken withal. It cannot be otherwise; for seeing this is a way and means of *the exercise of all grace*, it will not be neglected but where there is *a decay of all grace*, however men may please themselves with other pretences. And when they are thus ensnared, every foolish prejudice, every provocation, every wanton opinion and imagination, will confirm them in, and increase, their gradual backsliding.

And as it is with believers as unto the hearing of the word in general, so it is as unto *the degrees of advantage* which they find by it. When men have enjoyed the dispensation of the word in a peculiar manner, spiritual and effectual, if they can be content to forego it for that which is more cold and lifeless, provided it possesseth the same time and outward form with the other, it is no great evidence that their souls do prosper. It is therefore those alone who have a sense of the efficacy of the word on their souls and consciences unto all the holy ends of it, who cleave unto it with spiritual love and delight. They continually remember what holy

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impressions it hath made on them, what engagements it hath brought their souls into, what encouragements unto faith and obedience it hath furnished them withal, and [they] long after [the] renewed sense of its enjoyment. When we do not find in ourselves this foundation of spiritual delight in the dispensation of the gospel, we can have no great evidence that our affections are renewed.

So also it is in the duties of *prayer and meditation*. When the soul of a believer hath had experience of the communion which it hath had with God in them, or either of them; of the spiritual refreshment which it hath had from them; of the benefits and mercies which are obtained by them, in recovery from temptations, snares, despondencies, in victory over sin and Satan, in spiritual impressions, working it into a holy, watchful frame, which hath abode in it in other ways and occasions; with the like advantages wherewith fervent and effectual prayer and sincere heavenly meditation are accompanied,—it cannot but have love unto them and delight in them. But if indeed we have no experience of these things, if we find not these advantages in and by these duties, they cannot but be a burden unto us, nor do serve unto any other end but to satisfy convictions. He who had the benefit of a serene and wholesome air in a recovery from many diseases and distempers, with the preservation of his health so obtained, will love it and prize it; and so will he these duties who hath been partaker of any of those saving mercies and privileges wherewith they are accompanied. Some have been delivered from *the worst of temptations*, and the nearest approach of their prevalency (as to destroy themselves), by a sudden remembrance of the frame of their souls and the intimations of God's love in such or such a prayer, at such a time. Some have had the same deliverance from temptations unto sin; when they have been carried away under the power of their corruptions, and all circumstances have concurred under the apprehensions of it, a sudden thought of such a prayer or meditation, with engagement they made of themselves therein unto God, hath caused all the weapons of sin to fall out of its hands, and all the beauties of its allurements to disappear. When others have been under the power of such despondencies and disconsolations as that no present tenders of relief can approach unto them, they have been suddenly raised and refreshed by the remembrance of the intimate love and kindness between Christ and their souls that hath evidenced itself in former duties. Multitudes, in fears, distresses, and temptations, have found relief unto their spirits and encouragement unto their faith in the remembrance of the returns they have had unto former supplications in the like distresses. These are grounds of spiritual delight in these duties.

Heartless, lifeless, wordy prayers, the fruit of convictions and gifts,

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or of custom and outward occasions, however multiplied, and whatever devotion they seem to be accompanied withal, will never engage spiritual affections unto them. When these things are absent, when the soul hath not experience of them, prayer is but a lifeless form, a dead carcass, which it would be a torment unto a soul spiritually alive to be tied unto. There may be a season, indeed, when God will seem to hide himself from believers in their prayers, so as they shall neither find that life in themselves which they have done formerly, nor be sensible of any gracious communications from him; but this is done only for a time, and principally to stir them up unto that fervency and perseverance in prayer as may recover them into their former or a better estate than yet they have attained unto. The like may be said concerning all other duties of religion or ordinances of divine worship.

4. Believers, whose affections are spiritually renewed, do delight greatly in the duties of divine worship, because *they are the great instituted way whereby they may give glory unto God.* This is the first and principal end of all duties of religion as they respect divine appointment,—namely, to ascribe and give unto God the glory that is his due; for in them all acknowledgment is made of all the glorious excellencies of the divine nature, our dependence on him and relation unto him. And this is that which, in the first place, believers design in all the duties of divine worship. And the pattern set us by our blessed Saviour, in the prayer he taught his disciples, directs us thereunto. All the first requests of it concern immediately the glory of God, and the advancement thereof; for therein also all the blessedness and safety of the church are included. Those who fail in this design do err in all that they do; they never tend unto the mark proposed unto them. But this is that which principally animates the souls of them that believe, in all their duties; this their universal relation unto him, and love in that relation, makes necessary. Wherefore, that way and means whereby they may directly and solemnly ascribe and give glory unto God is precious and delightful unto them; and such are all the duties of divine worship. These are some of the things wherein the respect of affections spiritually renewed unto ordinances and duties of divine worship doth differ from the actings of affections toward the same object which are not so sanctified and renewed.

There are yet other things, accompanied with the same evidence of the difference between affections spiritually renewed and those which have only a general change wrought in them by convictions and some outward occasions, which must in one or two instances more be insisted on, with the consideration of such cases as derive from them; for my design herein is not only to declare when our

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minds are spiritually renewed, but also what is the nature and operation of our affections whereby we are constituted and denominated "spiritually minded," which is the subject of our whole inquiry. Herein, then, we shall proceed.

CHAPTER XVI.

Assimilation unto things heavenly and spiritual in affections spiritually renewed—This assimilation the work of faith; how, and whereby—Reasons of the want of growth in our spiritual affections as unto this assimilation.

WHEN affections are spiritually renewed in their exercise, or fixing of themselves on spiritual things, *there is an assimilation wrought in them, and in the whole soul, unto those spiritual and heavenly things, by faith.* But when there is a change in them only from other causes and occasions, and not from renewing grace, *there is an assimilation effected of spiritual and heavenly things themselves unto those affections, by imagination.*

This must somewhat at large be spoken unto, as that which gives the most eminent distinction between the frames of mind whose difference we inquire into. And to that end we shall cast our consideration of it into the ensuing observations:—

1. *Affections spiritually renewed are, in all their actings, in their whole exercise, under the guidance and conduct of faith.* It is faith which, in its spiritual light, hath the leading of the soul in the whole life of God. We live here by *faith*, as we shall do hereafter by *sight*. If our affections deviate or decline in the least from the guidance of the faith, they degenerate from their spirituality, and give up themselves unto the service of superstition. Next unto corrupt secular interest in the management of crafty, selfish seducers, this hath been the great inlet of all superstition and false worship into the world. *Blind affections* groping in the dark after spiritual things, having not the saving light of faith to conduct them, have seduced the minds of men into all manner of superstitious imaginations and practices, continuing to do so at this day. And wherever they will lead the way, when faith goeth not before them to discover both way and end, they that lead and the mind that is led must fall into one snare and pit or another.

Wherefore, affections that are spiritually renewed move not, act not, but as faith discovers their object and directs them unto it. It is faith that works by love. We can *love nothing sincerely with divine love* but what we *believe savingly with divine faith.* Let our affections unto any spiritual thing be never so vehement, if they spring not from faith, if they are not guided by it, they are neither accepted

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with God nor will promote the interest of spirituality and holiness in our own souls, Heb. xi. 6; Matt. vi. 22, 23. And this is the reason whence we ofttimes see great and plausible appearances of spiritual affections, which yet endure only for a season: They have been awakened, excited, acted, by one means or another, outward or inward; but not having the light of faith to guide them unto their proper object, they either wither and die, as unto any appearing of spiritual motions, or else keep the mind tossed up and down in perpetual disquietment, without rest or peace. "The foolish man wearieth himself because he cannot find the way to the city." So was it with them who, on the account of their attendance unto the doctrine of Christ, are called his disciples, John vi. Having preached unto them about the bread which came down from heaven and giveth life unto them that feed, they were greatly affected with it, and cried out, "Lord, evermore give us this bread," verse 34; but when he proceeded to declare the mystery of it, they having not faith to discern and apprehend it, their affections immediately decayed, and they forsook both him and his doctrine, verse 66.

We may consider one especial instance of this nature. Persons every day fall under great and *effectual convictions of sin*, and of their danger or certain misery thereby. This stirs up and acts all their affections, especially their fears, hopes, desires, sorrow, self-revenge, according as their condition calls for them. Hence sometimes they grow restless in their complaints, and turn themselves every way for relief, like men that are out of the way and bewildered in the night. But in this state and condition, tell them of the only proper way and means of their relief,—which, let the world say what it will, is *Christ and his righteousness alone*, with the grace of God in him,—and they quickly discover that they are strange things unto them, such as they do not understand, nor indeed approve. They cannot see them, they cannot discern them, nor any beauty in them for which they should be desired.

Wherefore, after their affections have been tossed up and down for a season under the power and torment of this conviction, they come unto one or other of these issues with them; for, either they utterly decay, and the mind loseth all sense of any impressions from them, so as that they wonder in themselves whence they were so foolish as to be tossed and troubled with such melancholy fancies, and so commonly prove as bad a sort of men as live upon the earth; or they take up in a formal, legal profession, wherein they never attain to be spiritually minded. This is the best end that our affections towards spiritual things, not guided by the light of faith, do come unto.

2. *Faith hath a clear prospect into and apprehension of spiritual things, as they are in themselves and in their own nature.* It

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is true, the light of it cannot fully comprehend the nature of all those things which are the objects of its affections: for they are infinite and incomprehensible, such as are the nature of God and the person of Christ; and some of them, as future glory, are not yet clearly revealed. But it discerns them all in a due manner, so as that they may in themselves, and not in any corrupt representation or imagination of them, be the objects of our affections. They are, as the apostle speaks, "spiritually discerned," 1 Cor. ii. 14; which is the reason why the natural man cannot receive them,—namely, because he hath not ability spiritually to discern them. And this is the principal end of the renovation of our minds, the principal work and effect of faith,—namely, the communication unto our minds and the acting in us of a spiritual, saving light, whereby we may see and discern spiritual things as they are in their own nature, kind, and proper use. See Eph. i. 17–19, "That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power." 2 Cor. iv. 6, "God shineth in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of his glory in the face of Jesus Christ." The end God designs is, to draw our hearts and affections unto himself; and unto this end he gives unto us a glorious internal light, whereby we may be enabled to discern the true nature of the things that we are to cleave unto with love and delight. Without this we have nothing but false images of spiritual things in our minds; not always as unto the truth or doctrine concerning them, but as unto their reality, power, and efficacy. This is one of the principal effects of faith, as it is the principal part of the renovation of our minds,—namely, to discover in the soul and represent unto the affections things spiritual and heavenly, in their nature, beauty, and genuine excellency. This attracts them if they be spiritually renewed, and causeth them to cleave with delight unto what is so proposed unto them. He that believes in Christ in a due manner, who thereon discovers the excellency of his person and the glory of his mediation, will both love him, and, on his believing, "rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." So is it in all other instances. The more steady is our view by faith of spiritual things, the more firm and constant will our affections be in cleaving unto them; and wherever the mind is darkened about them, by temptation or seduction from the truth, there the affections will be quickly weakened and impaired. Wherefore,—

3. *Affections thus led unto and fixed on spiritual and heavenly*

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things, under the light and conduct of faith, are more and more renewed, or made in themselves more spiritual and heavenly. They are, in their cleaving unto them and delight in them, *continually changed and assimilated* unto the things themselves, becoming more and more to be what they are,—namely, spiritual and heavenly.

This transformation is wrought by faith, and is one of its most excellent faculties and operations. See 2 Cor. iii. 18. And the means whereby it works herein are our affections. In them as we are carnal, we are conformed unto this world; and by them as we are sanctified are we "transformed by the renewing of our mind," Rom. xii. 2. And this transformation is the introduction of a new form or nature into our souls, diverse from that wherewith we were before endued. So is it described, Isa. xi. 6–9. A spiritual nature they were changed into. And it is twofold:—First, *Original* and radical as to the substance or essence of it, which is the effect of the first act of divine grace upon our souls when we are made new creatures. Herein our affections are passive; they do not transform us, but are transformed. Secondly, *Gradual* as unto its increase; and therein faith works in and by the affections.

Whenever the affections do cleave intensely unto any object they receive an impression from it,—as the wax doth from the seal when applied unto it,—which changeth them into its own likeness. So the apostle affirms of sensual, unclean persons, they "have eyes full of adultery," 2 Pet. ii. 14. Their affections are so wholly possessed and filled with their lustful objects as that they have brought forth their own likeness upon their imaginations. That blots out all others, and leaves them no inclinations but what they stir up in them. When men are filled with the "love of this world," which carries along with it all their other affections, their hopes, fears, and desires, unto a constant exercise about the same object, they become earthly minded. Their minds are so changed into the image of the things themselves, by the effectual working of the corrupt principles of sin, self-love and lust, as if they were made up of the earth; and therefore have no savour of any thing else.

In like manner, when by faith men come to embrace heavenly things, through the effectual working of a principle of spiritual life and grace in them, they are every day made more and more heavenly: "The inward man is renewed day by day." Love is more sincere and ardent, delight is more ravishing and sensible, desires are more enlarged and intense, and by all a taste and relish of heavenly things is heightened into refreshing experience. See Rom. v. 2–5.

This is the way whereby one grace is added unto another, 2 Pet. i. 5–7, in degrees. Great is the assimilation between renewed affections and their spiritual objects that by this means may be attained.

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The mind hereby becomes the temple of God, wherein he dwells by the Spirit; Christ also dwelleth in believers, and they in him: "God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him," 1 John iv. 16.

Love in its proper exercise gives a mutual inhabitation unto God and believers. In brief, he whose affections are set upon heavenly things in a due manner will be heavenly minded, and in the due exercise of them will that heavenly mindedness be increased. The transformation and assimilation that is wrought is not in the objects or spiritual things themselves; they are not changed, neither in themselves nor in the representation made of them unto our minds; but the change is in our affections, which are made like unto them.

Two cases deriving from this principle and consideration may be here spoken unto, and shall be so,—the first in this, and the other in the following chapter. The one is concerning the slowness and imperceptibility of the growth of our affections in their assimilation unto heavenly things, with the causes and reasons of it. The other is the decays that frequently befall men in their affections unto spiritual things, instead of growing and thriving in them, with the reasons and causes thereof.

1. The progress and growth of our affections into spirituality and heavenliness, into conformity unto the things they are set upon, is oftentimes very *slow, and sometimes imperceptible;* yea, for the most part, it is a hard thing to find it satisfactorily in ourselves or others. Our affections stand like shrubs in the wilderness, which see not when good cometh, and are not like plants in a garden enclosed, which is watered every day. But it is not so without our *folly* and our *sin.*

(1.) The *folly* that keeps many in this condition consists herein: *The generality of Christians are contented with their present measures, and design little more than not to lose the ground they have gained.* And a pernicious folly it is, that both ruins the glory of religion and deprives the souls of men of peace and consolation. But so it is. Men have some grounds of persuasion, or at least they hope and suppose they have such grounds, that they are "passed from death unto life," that they are in a state of grace and acceptance with God. This state they will endeavour to preserve by a diligent performance of the duties it requireth, and the avoidance of such sins as whereby they might make a forfeiture of it; but as for earnest, watchful endeavours and diligence to thrive in this state, to grow in grace, to be changed from glory to glory into the image of Christ, to press forward towards the mark of the high calling, and after perfection, to lay hold upon eternal life, to be more holy, more humble, more righteous, more spiritually minded, to have their affections

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more and more transformed into the likeness of things above, they are but few that sincerely and diligently apply themselves unto it, or unto the means of these things. The measures which they have attained unto give satisfaction unto the church, and reputation in the world that they are professors; and some so speak peace unto their own souls. To be more holy and heavenly, to have their affections more taken up with the things above, they suppose somewhat inconsistent with their present occasions and affairs. By this means hath religion lost much of its glory, and the souls of men have been deprived of the principal advantages of it in this world.

Such persons are like unto men who live in a country wherein they are not only pressed with poverty and all sorts of misery, but are also obnoxious unto grievous punishments, and death itself, if they are taken in it. In this condition, they are told and assured of another country, wherein, so soon as they are arrived, they shall be freed from all fear of danger of punishment; and if they pass farther into it, they shall meet with riches, plenty, and a fair inheritance provided for them. Hereon they betake themselves unto their voyage to obtain an entrance into it and possession of it; but no sooner do they come within the borders, and so are free from danger, or fear of punishment and death, but they sit down, and will go no farther to enjoy the good things of the country whereinto they are come. And it falls out with many of them, that, through their sloth, negligence, and ignorance, they take up short of the true bounds and limits of the country of liberty and peace which they aimed at, whereby danger and death surprise them unawares. This ruin could not have befallen them had they industriously endeavoured to enter into the heart of the country, and have possessed the good things thereof. At best, being only on the borders, they lead a poor life all their days, exposed to wants and danger.

So it is in this case. Men falling under the power of convictions, and those restless fears wherewith they are accompanied, will stir up themselves and inquire how they may "flee from the wrath to come," how they may be delivered from the state of sin, and the eternal misery which will ensue thereon.

In the gospel, not only mercy and pardon are proposed unto them on their believing, which is the first entrance into the heavenly country; but peace, and joy, and spiritual strength, upon their admission into it, and a progress made in it by faith and obedience. But many, when they have attained so far as that they have some hopes of pardon and freedom from the curse, so as to deliver them from their tormenting fears, will endeavour to preserve those hopes and keep that state, but will not pass on to a full enjoyment of the precious things of the gospel, by growth in grace and spiritual affections.

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But how many of them fall under woful mistakes! for supposing themselves to be in a gospel state, it proves in the issue that they never entered into it. They were not, it may be, far from the kingdom of heaven, in the same sense as it was spoken of him who never came thither. There is no way to secure an interest in the gospel, as to pardon and mercy, safety and deliverance, but by a growth in grace, holiness, and spirituality; which gives an entrance into the choicest mercies and privileges of it.

This folly of men in taking up with their measures, endeavouring only to maintain that state and condition which they hope they have attained, is the great reason why their affections do not daily grow up into spirituality, through an assimilation unto heavenly things. And a folly it is attended with innumerable aggravations; as, for instance,—

[1.] It is contrary and destructive unto *the genuine and principal property of gospel grace;* for it is everywhere compared by our Saviour unto things which, from small seeds and beginnings, do grow up by a continual increase unto large measures,—as to a grain of mustard seed, a little leaven, and the like.

That grace in whose nature it is not to thrive and grow may justly be suspected, and ought diligently to be examined by them who take care of their own souls, and would not be eternally deceived.

[2.] It is contrary unto the most excellent or invaluable *evangelical promises* recorded in the Old Testament and the New, and which are amongst the principal supportments of the faith, hope, and comfort of believers. God hath given them unto us to encourage us unto an expectation of such supplies of grace as shall cause us to thrive and grow against all opposition, unto the utmost of our continuance in this world. And they are so multiplied as that there is no need to mention any of them in particular; God evidencing thereby how great is the grace, and how precious, which he so often promiseth, and of what consideration it is unto ourselves. See Ps. xcii. 13–15; Isa. xl. 28–31. Wherefore, the folly of taking up with present measures of grace, holiness, and spirituality, is attended with two unspeakable evils:—1*st*, A *signal contempt* of the love, grace, faithfulness, and wisdom of God, in giving of us such promises of grace, to make us to increase, thrive, and grow. How can it be done more effectually than by such a neglect of his promised grace? 2*dly*, An *evidence* that such persons love not, care not for, grace and holiness for their own sake, but merely to serve their turn at present, as they suppose; nor do desire the least of grace or privilege by Christ without which they can have any hopes to get to heaven. This sufficiently discovers men to be wholly under the power of self-love, and to centre therein; for if they may have so much grace and mercy as may save them, they care for no more.

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[3.] It is repugnant unto *the honour of gospel grace*, as though it would carry us so far, and no farther, in the way to glory: for it must be known that this sort of persons, who sit down in their present measures and attainments, either really have no true grace at all, or that which is of the lowest, meanest, and most imperceptible size and degree; for if any one hath attained any considerable growth in faith and love, in the mortification of sin, in heavenly mindedness, it is utterly impossible but that ordinarily he will be pressing forward towards farther attainments and farther degrees of spiritual strength in the life of God. So the apostle declares it in his own example, Phil. iii. 12–14. What thoughts can these persons have concerning the glory, power, and efficacy of gospel grace, which they suppose they have received? If they measure them by the effects which they find in themselves, either as unto the mortification of sin, or strength unto and delight in duties of holiness, or as unto spiritual consolation, they can see no excellency nor beauty in them; for they do not manifest themselves but in their success, as they transform the soul daily into the image of Christ.

[4.] *It is that which hath lost the reputation and glory of religion in the world*, and therein the honour of the gospel itself: for the most of professors do take up with such measures as put no lustre upon it, as give no commendation unto the religion they profess; for their measures allow them such a conformity unto the world, in their ways, words, and actions, in their gestures, apparel, and attire, as that they are no way visibly to be distinguished from it; yea, the ground and reason why the most do rest in their present measures is, because they will not be farther differenced from the world. This hath greatly lost the glory, honour, and reputation of religion amongst us. And, on the other side, if all visible professors would endeavour continually to grow and thrive in spirituality of mind and heavenliness of affections, with fruits suited thereunto, it would bring a conviction on the world that there is a secret invisible power accompanying the religion they profess, transforming them daily into the image and likeness of God.

[5.] Whatever is pretended unto the contrary, *it is inconsistent with all solid peace of conscience;* for no such thing is promised unto any who live in such a contempt of divine promises, nor is it attainable but by the diligent exercise of all those graces which lie neglected under this frame. Few men are able to judge whether they have real, internal, abiding peace or no, unless it be in case of trials and temptations. At other seasons, general hopes and confidences do or may supply the want of it in their minds; but when any fear, danger, trial, or word of conviction, befalls them, they cannot but inquire and examine how it is with them. And if they find their affec-

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tions cold, dead, earthly, carnal, withering, not spiritual or heavenly, there will be an end of their supposed peace, and they will fall into woful disquietments; and they will then find that the root of all this evil lies in this frame and disposition: They have been so far satisfied with their present measures or attainments in religion, as that the utmost of their endeavours has been but to preserve their station, or not to forfeit it by open sins,—to keep their souls alive from the severe reflections of the word, and their reputation fair in the church of God; spiritually to thrive, to prosper in their souls, to wax fat and flourishing in the inward man, to bring forth more fruit as age increaseth, to press towards perfection, are things they have not designed nor pursued.

Hence it is that so many among us are visibly at an unthrifty stand in the world,—that where they were one year, there they are another, like shrubs in the wilderness; not like plants in the "garden of God," not as vines planted in "a very fruitful hill." Yea, though many are sensible themselves that they are cold, lifeless, and fruitless, yet will they not be convinced that there is a necessity of making a daily progress in spirituality and heavenly mindedness, whereby the inward man may be renewed day by day, and grace augmented with the increase of God. This is a work, as they suppose, for them who have nothing else to do; not consistent with their business, callings, and occasions; not necessary, as they hope, unto their salvation; nor, it may be, to be attained by them if they should set themselves about it. This apprehension or imagination, upon the beginning of the declension and decay of Christian religion in the many, cast off holiness and devotion unto a sort of men who undertook to retire themselves utterly out of the world; amongst whom also the substance of religion was quickly lost, and a cloud or meteor of superstition embraced in the room of it. But this folly is ominous unto the souls of men.

Those who have made the greatest progress in the conformity of their affections unto things spiritual and heavenly know most of its necessity, excellency, and desirableness; yea, without some progress in it, these things will not be known. Such will testify that the more they attain herein, the more they see there is yet to to be attained, and the more they do desire to attain what is before. Forgetting those things which are behind, they reach forth unto the things that are yet before them, like men running in a race, whose prize and reward is yet before them, Phil. iii. 13, 14. It is a comely thing to see a Christian weaned from the world, minding heavenly things, green and flourishing in spiritual affections; and it is the more lovely because it is so rare. The generality of them take up with those measures which neither glorify God nor bring in durable peace unto their own souls.

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That which men pretend and complain of herein is, *the difficulty of the work.* They can, as they suppose, preserve their present station, but to press forward, to grow in grace, to thrive in their affections, this is too hard for them. But this complaint is unequal and unjust, and adds unto the guilt of their sloth. It reflects upon the words of our Saviour, that "his yoke is easy and his burden light," that "his commandments are not grievous." It expresseth unbelief in the promises of God tendering such supplies of grace as to render all the ways of Wisdom easy, yea, mercy and peace. It is contrary unto the experience of all who have with any sincerity and diligence engaged in the ways of gospel obedience. And the whole cause of the pretended difficulty lies in themselves alone, which may be reduced unto these two heads:—

1*st, A desire to retain some thing or things that is or are inconsistent with such a progress;* for unless the heart be ready on all occasions to esteem every thing "as loss and dung, so as we may win Christ," the work will be accompanied with insuperable difficulties. This is the first principle of religion, of gospel obedience, that all things are to be despised for Christ. But this difficulty ariseth not from the thing itself, but from our indisposition unto it and unfitness for it. That which is an easy, pleasant walk unto a sound and healthy man is a toilsome journey to him that is diseased and infirm. In particular, whilst men will retain an inordinate respect unto the world, the vanities, the pleasures, the profits, the contentments of it; whilst self-love, putting an undue valuation on our persons, our relations, our enjoyments, our reputations, doth cleave unto us,—we shall labour in the fire when we engage in this duty, or rather, we shall not at all sincerely engage in it. Wherefore the apostle tells us that in this case we must cast off every weight, and the sin that doth so easily beset us, if we intend to run with joy the race that is set before us, Heb. xii. 1.

2*dly, It is because men dwell continually upon the entrances of religion, in the first and lowest exercise of grace.* Some are always beginning at religion, and the beginning of things are always difficult. They design not to be complete in the whole will of God, nor to give all graces their perfect work. They do not with use habituate grace unto a readiness in all the actings of it, which the apostle commends in them that are "perfect" or complete, Heb. v. 14. Hence he calls such persons "babes and carnal," comparatively unto them that are "strong men and spiritual." Such persons do not oblige themselves unto the whole work and all the duties of religion, but only to what they judge necessary unto them in their present circumstances. In particular, they do not attempt a thorough work in the mortification of any sin, but are hewing and hacking at it, as their

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convictions are urgent or abate, the wounds whereof in the body of sin are quickly healed. They give not any grace its perfect work, but are always making essays, and so give over.

Whilst it is thus with any, they shall always be deluded with the apprehensions of insuperable difficulties as to the growth of their affections in spirituality and heavenliness. Remove these things out of the way, as they ought to be removed, and we shall find all the paths wherein we are to walk towards God to be pleasantness and peace.

This is the first cause whence it is that there may be affections truly spiritual and graciously renewed in some persons, who yet do not thrive in an assimilation and conformity unto heavenly things: Men take up with their present measures, and thereon pretend either necessary occasion or discouragements from difficulties in attempting spiritual growth in the inward man. But they may thank themselves if, as they bring no honour unto Christ, so they have no solid peace in their own souls.

(2.) As the evil proceedeth from *folly*, so it is always the consequent of *sin*, of *many sins*, of various sorts. Let us not dwell on heartless complaints that we do not find our affections lively and heavenly, that we do not find the inward man to thrive or grow. Let us not hearken after this or that relief or comfort under this consideration, as many things are usually insisted on unto this purpose. They may be of use when persons are under temptations, and not able to make a right judgment of themselves; but in the course of our ordinary walking with God, they are not to be attended nor retired unto. The general reason of this evil state is our own sinful carelessness, negligence, and sloth, with perhaps an indulgence unto some known lust or corruption. And we do in vain seek after refreshing cordials, as though we were only spiritually faint, when we stand in need of lancings and burnings, as nigh unto a lethargy. It would be too long to give instances of those sins which fail not effectually to obstruct the thriving of spiritual affections: but, in general, when men are careless as unto that continual watch which they ought to keep over their hearts; whilst they are negligent in holy duties, either as unto the seasons of them or the manner of their performance; when they are strangers unto holy meditation and self-examination; whilst they inordinately pursue the things of the world, or are so tender and delicate as that they will not undergo the hardship of a heavenly life, either as unto the inward or outward man; much more when they are vain in their conversation, corrupt in their communication, especially if under the predominant influence of any particular lust,—it is vain to think of thriving in spiritual affections. And yet thus it is with all who ordinarily and in their constant course are thriftless herein.

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CHAPTER XVII.

Decays in spiritual affections, with the causes and danger of them—Advice unto them who are sensible of the evil of spiritual decays.

2. It must be acknowledged that there is yet that which is worse than what we have yet insisted on, and more opposite unto the growth of affections in conformity unto heavenly things, which is the proper character of those that are spiritually renewed; and this is their spiritual decay, manifesting itself in sensible and visible effects.

Some there are, yea many, who, upon the beginning of a profession of their conversion unto God, have made a great appearance of vigorous, active, spiritual affections; yea, it is so with most, it may be all, who are really so converted. *God takes notice of the love of the youth in his people, of the love of their espousals.*

In some, this vigour of spiritual affections is from the real power of grace, exerting its efficacy on their hearts and in their minds. In others, it is from other causes; as, for instance, relief from conviction, by spiritual illumination, will produce this effect. And this falls out unto the advantage of such persons, that generally a change is wrought in their younger days; for then their affections in their natural powers are active, and bear great sway in the whole soul. Wherefore, the change that is made is most eminent in them, be it what it will. But as men increase in age, and thereon grow up in carnal wisdom and a great valuation of earthly things, with their care about them and converse in them, they abate and decay in their spiritual affections every day; they will abide in their profession, but have *lost their first love.*

It is a shame and folly unutterable that it should be so with any who make profession of that religion, wherein there are so many incomparable excellencies to endear and engage them to it more and more. But why should we hide what experience makes manifest in the sight of the sun, and what multitudes proclaim concerning themselves? Wherefore, I look upon it as a great evidence, if not absolutely of the sincerity of grace, yet of the life and growth of it, when men as they grow up in age do grow in an undervaluation of present things, in contempt of the world, in duties of charity and bounty, and decay not in any of them. But I say it is usual that the entrances of men's profession of religion and conversion unto God are attended with vigorous, active affections towards spiritual things. Of them who really and sincerely believed, it is said that on their believing "they rejoiced with joy unspeakable and full of glory;" and of those who only had a work of conviction on them, improved

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by temporary faith, that "they received the word with joy, and did many things gladly."

In this state do many abide and thrive, until their affections be wholly transformed into the image and likeness of things above. But with many of all sorts it is not so. They fall into woful decays as unto their affections about spiritual things, and consequently, in their whole profession and conversation, their moisture becomes as the drought in summer. They have no experience of the life and actings of them in themselves, nor any comfort or refreshment from them; they honour not the gospel with any fruits of love, zeal, or delight, nor are useful any way unto others by their example. Some of them have had seeming recoveries, and are yet again taken into a lifeless frame. Warnings, afflictions, sicknesses, the word, have awakened them, but they are fallen again into a dead sleep, so as that they seem to be "trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots."

Some things must be spoken unto this woful condition in general, as that which is directly opposite unto the grace and duty of being spiritually minded, and contrary unto and obstructive of the growth of spiritual affections in an assimilation unto heavenly things. And what shall be spoken may be applied unto all the degrees of these decays, though all of them are not alike dangerous or perilous.

(1.) There may be *a time of temptation*, wherein a soul may apprehend in itself not only a decay in, but an utter loss of, all spiritual affections, when yet it is not so. As believers may apprehend and judge that the Lord hath forsaken and forgotten them when he hath not done so, Isa. xlix. 14, 15; so they may, under their temptations, apprehend that they have forsaken God, when they have not done so; as a man in the night may apprehend he hath lost his way, and be in great distress, when he is in his proper road: for temptation brings darkness and amazement, and leads into mistakes and a false judgment in all things. They find not, it may be, grace working in love, joy, and delight, as formerly, nor that activity of heart and mind in holy duties which spiritual affections gave unto them; but yet, it may be, the same grace works in godly sorrow, by mourning, humiliation, and self-abasement, no less effectually, nor less acceptably unto God. Such as these I separate from the present consideration.

(2.) There may be *a decay in affections themselves* as unto their actings towards any objects whatever, at least as unto the outward symptoms and effects of them; and on this ground their operations toward spiritual things may be less sensible. So men in their younger days may be more ready to express their sorrow by tears, and their joy by sensible exultation and motion of their spirits, than in riper

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years. And this may be so when there is no decay of grace in the affections as renewed. But,—

[1.] When it is so, it is a *burden* unto them in whom it is. They cannot but mourn and have a godly jealousy over themselves, lest the decays they find should not be in the outward but the inward, not in the natural but the spiritual man; and they will labour that in all duties, and at all times, it may be with them as in days of old, although they cannot attain that strength in them, that vigour of spirit, that life, joy, peace, and comfort, which many have had experience of.

[2.] There will be in such persons no *decays in holiness* of life, or as unto diligence in all religious duties. If the decay be really of grace in the affections, it will be accompanied with a proportionable decay in all other things wherein the life of God is concerned; but if it be only as unto the sensible actings of natural affections, no such decay will ensue.

[3.] Grace will in this case more vigorously act itself in the other faculties and powers of the soul, as the *judgment* and the *will*, in their approbation of and firm adherence unto spiritual things. But,—

When men find, or may find, their affections yet quick, active, and intent on other things, as the lawful enjoyments and comforts of this life, it is in vain for them to relieve themselves that the decays they find are in their affections as natural, and not, as they ought to be, gracious. If we see a man in his old age grow more in love with the things of this world, and less in love with the things of God, it is not through the weakness of nature, but through the strength of sin.

On these, and, it may be, some other the like occasions, there may be an apprehension of a decay in spiritual affections when it may not be so, at least not unto the *degree* that is apprehended. But when it is so *really*, as it is evidently with many, I had almost said with the most in these days, it is a woful frame of heart, and never enough to be lamented. It is that which lies in direct contradiction unto that spiritual mindedness which is life and peace. It is a consumption of the soul, which threatens it with death every day.

It belongs not unto my design to treat of it in particular, yet I cannot let it pass without some remarks upon it, it being an evil almost epidemical among professors, and prevalent in some unto such a degree as that they seem to be utterly forsaken of all powers of spiritual life.

Now, besides all that *folly* and *sin* which we before discovered as the causes of the want of the growth of our affections in spirituality and heavenliness, which in this case of their decay are more abominable, there is a multiplication of evils wherewith this state of heart and mind is accompanied; for,—

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(1.) It is that which, of all things, the Lord Christ is most displeased with in *churches* or professors. He pities them in their temptations, he suffers with them in their persecutions, he intercedes for them on their surprisal, but threatens them under their spiritual decays, Rev. ii. 4, 5, iii. 1–3. This he cannot bear with, as that which both reflects dishonour upon himself, and which he knows to be ruinous unto those in whom it is. He will longer bear with them who are utterly dead than with those who abide under these decays, Rev. iii. 15, 16. This is the only case wherein he threatens to reject and cast off a professing church, to take away his candlestick from it, unless it be that of false worship and idolatry. He that spake thus unto the churches of old speaks now the same unto us; for he lives for ever, and is always the same, and his word is living and unchangeable. There is not one of us who are under this frame, but the Lord Christ by his word and Spirit testifieth his displeasure against us; and if he be against us, who shall plead for us? Consider what he says in this case, Rev. ii. 5, iii. 3. Oh! who can stand before these dreadful intimations of his displeasure? The Lord help us to mind it, lest he in whom we profess to place our only trust be in our trial found our greatest enemy! Take heed of such sins as Christ himself, our only advocate, hath put a mark upon as those which he will not save us in.

(2.) It is that wherewith, above all things, *the Holy Spirit is grieved*. His work it is to give grace an increase and progress in our souls; he begins it, and he carries it on. And there can be no greater grief unto a wise and gracious worker than to have his work decay and go backward under his hand. This is the occasion of those complaints of God which we find in the Scripture, of the unprofitableness and backsliding of men after the use of means and remedies for their fruitfulness and cure. "What," saith he, "could I have done more for my vineyard than I have done? Why, then, when I looked for grapes, did it bring forth wild grapes?" Can any thing be apprehended to be such a just matter of grief and complaint unto the Holy Spirit, as to see and find those whom he had once raised up unto holy and heavenly affections, so as that their delights were in, and their thoughts much upon, the things that are above, become earthly or sensual, to have no sensible actings of any of his graces in them? which is the state of them who are under the power of spiritual decays. And this is the only case wherein God speaks unto men in the way of complaint and expostulation, and useth all sorts of arguments to convince them of their folly herein.

When a wise, tender, and careful parent, [who] hath been diligent in the use of all means for the education of his child, and he for some time hath given good hopes of himself, finds him to slacken in his

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diligence, to be careless in his calling, to delight in evil company,—how solicitous is his heart about him! how much is he grieved and affected with his miscarriage! The heart of the Spirit of God is infinitely more tender towards us than that of the most affectionate parent can be towards an only child; and when he with cost and care hath nourished and brought us up unto some growth and progress in spiritual affections, wherein all his concerns in us do lie, for us to grow cold, dull, earthly minded, to cleave unto the pleasures or lusts of this world,—how is he grieved! how is he provoked! It may be this consideration of grieving the Holy Spirit is of no great weight with some; they should have little concernment herein if they could well free themselves in other respects: but let such persons know it is impossible for them to give a greater evidence of a profligate hardness in sin.

(3.) This is that which in an especial manner provoketh *the judgments of God against any church*, as was intimated before. When, in the order of profession and worship, any church hath a name to live, but as to the power of grace acting in the affections is dead; when it is not so cold as to forsake the external institutions of worship, nor so hot as to enliven their duties with spiritual affections,—the Lord Christ will not long bear with them; yea, judgment will suddenly break out towards such a house of God.

(4.) It is absolutely inconsistent with all *comfortable assurance of the love of God*. Whatever persons under the power of such a frame pretend unto of that kind, it is sinful security, not gracious assurance or peace. And constantly as professors grow cold and decay in their spiritual affections, stupidity of conscience and security of mind do grow also upon them. It is so, I say, unless they are sometimes surprised or overtaken with some greater sin, which reflects severely on their consciences, and casts them for a time under troubles and distresses. But that peace with God and a comfortable assurance of salvation should be consistent with an habitual decay in grace, especially in those graces which should act themselves in our affections, is contrary to the whole tenor and testimony of the Scripture; and the supposition of it would be the bane and poison of religion. I do not say that our assurance and peace with God do arise wholly from the actings of grace in us; there are other causes of them, whereinto they are principally resolved;—but this I say, under an habitual declension or decay of grace in the spirituality of our affections, no man can keep or maintain a gracious sense of the love of God, or of peace with him. And therefore there is no duty more severely to be pressed on all at this day than a diligent examination and trial of the grounds of their peace, lest it should be with any of them as it was with Laodicea, who was satisfied in her good state and condition,

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when it was most miserable and almost desperate. Yea, I must say that it is impossible that many professors whom we see and converse withal should have any solid peace with God. "Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?" It is a fruit that will not grow on a vain, earthly, selfish frame of mind and conversation. And therefore such persons, whatever they pretend, are either asleep in a sinful security, or live on most uncertain hopes, which probably may deceive them. Nothing can be so ruinous unto our profession as once to suppose it is an easy matter, a thing of course, to maintain our peace with God. God forbid but that our utmost diligence and continued endeavours to thrive in every grace should be required hereunto! The whole beauty and glory of our religion depends hereon. "To be spiritually minded is life and peace."

(5.) Such a decay as that described is a dangerous symptom of an *evil state and condition*, and that those in whom it is will at last be found to be but hypocrites. I know such persons will or may have pretended evidences unto the contrary, and that they are well enough satisfied of and with their own sincerity in many things, so as that it is impossible to fix upon them the sense and conviction of being but hypocrites. But this apprehension ariseth from a false notion of hypocrisy. No man, they suppose, is a hypocrite, but he that generally or universally pretends himself in religion to be what he is not, and what he knows himself not to be, or at least might easily do so; and it is true that this is the broadest notion of pharisaical hypocrisy: but take a hypocrite for him who, under light, profession, gifts, duties, doth habitually and willingly fail in any point of sincerity, he is no less a perishing hypocrite than the former, and it may alter the case with them. I do not say that every one in whom there is this prevalent decay in spiritual affections is a hypocrite; God forbid! I only say that when it continues without remedy, it is such a symptom of hypocrisy as that he who is wise and hath a care of his soul will not rest until he hath searched it unto the bottom. For it seems as if it were thus with such persons: They have had a false or imperfect work in that conversion unto God which they have professed. Conviction of sin, communication of spiritual light and gifts, alteration upon the affections, change of society and conversation, have made it up. Now, it is the nature of such a work greatly to flourish for a season, in all the principal parts and duties of profession; but it is in its nature also gradually to decay, until it be quite withered away. In some it is lost by the power of some vigorous temptations, and particular lusts indulged unto, ending in worldliness and sensuality; but in the most it decays gradually, until it hath lost all its savour and sap. See John xv. 5. Wherefore, whilst men find this decay in themselves, unless they are fallen under the

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power of a destructive security, unless they are hardened through the deceitfulness of sin, they cannot but think it their duty to examine how things stand with them, whether they ever effectually closed with Christ, and had the faith of God's elect, which works by love, seeing it is with them as though they had only a work of another nature: for a saving work, in its own nature and in the diligent use of means, thrives and groweth, as the whole Scripture testifieth; but it is this false and imperfect working that hath no root, and is thus subject to withering.

(6.) Persons in such an estate are apt to deceive themselves with *false hopes and notions*, whereby the deceitfulness of sin doth put forth its power to harden them unto their ruin. Two ways there are whereby this pernicious effect is produced;—the one by the prevalency of a particular lust or sin; the other by a neglect of spiritual duties, and a vain conversation in the world, under which the soul pines away and consumes.

As unto the first of these, there are *three false notions* whereby the deceitfulness of sin deludes the souls of men:—

[1.] The first is, that it is that *one sin alone* wherein they would be indulged. Let them be spared in this *one thing*, and in all others they will be exact enough. This is the composition that Naaman would have made in the matters of religion, 2 Kings v. 18, and it is that which many trust unto. Hence it hath, by the event, been made to appear that some persons have lived long in the practice of some gross sin, and yet all the while used *a semblance of great diligence* in other duties of religion. This is a false notion, whereby poor sinners delude their own souls; for suppose it possible that a man should give himself up unto any lust, or be under the power of it, and yet be observant of all other duties, yet this would give him no relief as unto the eternal condition of his soul. The rule is peremptory unto this purpose, James ii. 10, 11. One sin willingly lived in is as able to destroy a man's soul as a thousand. Besides, it is practically false. There is no man that lives in any one known sin but he really lives in more, though that only bears the chiefest sway. With some such persons these sins appear unto others, who observe their frame and spirit, though they appear not to themselves; in some they are manifest in themselves, although they are hidden from others, 1 Tim. v 24. But let no man relieve himself with thoughts that it is but one sin, whilst that one sin keeps him in a constant neglect of God. Hence,—

[2.] They deceive themselves hereby; for they judge that although they cannot as yet *shake off their sin*, yet they will continue still to love God and abound in the duties of his worship. They will not become haters of God and his ways and persecutors

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for all the world; and therefore hope that, notwithstanding this one Zoar, this lesser sin, which their constitution and their circumstances engage them in, it may be well with them at the last. This also is a false notion, a mere instrument in the hand of sin to act its deceit by; for no man that willingly liveth in any sin can love God at all, as is evident in that rule, 1 John ii. 15. It is but a false pretence of love to God that any man hath who liveth in any known sin. Where God is not loved above all, he is not loved at all; and he is not so where men will not part with one cursed lust for his sake. Let not your light deceive you, nor your gifts, nor your duties, nor your profession; if you live in sin, you love not God.

[3.] They determine that at *such or such a season* or time, after such satisfaction given unto their lusts or pleasures, they will utterly give over, so as that iniquity shall not be their ruin. But this is a false notion also, an effectual instrument of the deceitfulness of sin. He that will not now give over, who will not immediately upon the discovery of the prevalency of any sin and warning about it endeavour sincerely and constantly its relinquishment, say what he will and pretend what he will, never intends to give over, nor is it probable, in an ordinary way, that ever he will do so. When men's decays are from the prevalency of particular sins, by these and the like false notions do they harden themselves unto ruin.

For those who are pining away under hectical consumption, a general decay of the vital spirits of religion, they have also false notions whereby they deceive themselves; as,—

[1.] That although they have some cause to *mistrust themselves*, yet indeed their condition is not so bad as some may apprehend it, or as they are warned it is. And this ariseth from hence, that they have not as yet been overtaken with any enormous sin which hath filled their consciences with terror and disquietment. But this is a false notion also; for every decay is dangerous, especially such as the mind is ready to plead for and to countenance itself in.

[2.] They are prone to suppose that this decay doth not arise from *themselves and the evil of their own hearts*, but from their circumstances, businesses, present occasions, and state of life; which when they are freed from, they will at least return unto their former love and delight in spiritual things. But this is a false notion also, by virtue of that rule, Heb. iii. 12. Let men's circumstances and occasions of life be what they will, all their departures from God are from "an evil heart of unbelief."

[3.] They judge it no hard matter to retrieve themselves out of this state, but that which they can easily do *when there is an absolute necessity for it*. But this is a false notion also. Recovery from back-

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sliding is the hardest task in Christian religion, and which few make either comfortable or honourable work of.

In this state, I say, men are apt by such false reasonings to deceive themselves unto their eternal ruin; which makes the consideration of it the more necessary.

Wherefore, I say, lastly, upon the whole, that whoso find themselves under the power of this wretched frame, whoso are sensible in themselves, or at least make it evident unto others, that they are under a decay in their spiritual condition, if they rest in that state, without groaning, labouring, endeavouring for deliverance from it, they can have no well-grounded hopes in themselves of life and immortality; yea, they are in those "paths which go down unto the chambers of death."

I cannot let this pass without something of advice unto them who find themselves under such decays, are sensible of them, and would be delivered from them, and I shall give it in a few words:—

First, *Remember former things;* call to mind how it was with you in the spring and vigour of your affections, and compare your present state, enjoyment, peace, and quiet, with what they were then. This will be a great principle of return unto God, Hosea ii. 7. And to put a little weight upon it, we may consider,—

First, God himself makes it *on his part* a ground and reason of his return unto us in a way of mercy, and of the continuance of his love, Jer. ii. 2. Even when a people are under manifold decays, whilst yet they are within the bounds of God's covenant and mercy, he will remember their first love, with the fruits and actings of it in trials and temptations; which moves his compassion towards them. And the way to have God thus remember it, is for us to remember it with delight, and longing of soul that it were with us as in those days of old, when we had the love of espousals for God in Christ, Jer. xxxi. 18–20.

Secondly, It is the way whereby the saints of old have refreshed and encouraged themselves under their greatest despondencies. So doth the psalmist in many places; as, for instance, Ps. xlii. 6, "O my God, my soul is cast down within me: therefore will I remember thee from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites, from the hill Mizar." David in the time of his persecution by Saul, when he wandered up and down in deserts, wildernesses, and solitudes, had, under his fears, distresses, and exercises, great, holy, spiritual communion with God; as many of his psalms composed on such occasions do testify. And the greater his distresses were, the more fervent were his affections in all his addresses unto God; and he was never in greater than when he escaped out of the cave at Adullam, and went thence unto Mizpeh of Moab, to get shelter for his

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parents, 1 Sam. xxii. 3. Then was he in the land of the Hermonites, the hill Hermon being the boundary eastward of the Israelites' possession next to Moab, Deut. iii. 8, 9. There, no doubt, David had a blessed exercise of his faith and of all his affections towards God, wherein his soul found great refreshment. Being now in great distress and disconsolation of spirit, among other things under a sense that God had forgotten him, Ps. xlii. 9, he calls to mind the blessed experience he had of communion with God, in the land of the Hermonites, wherein he now found support and refreshment. So at other times he called to remembrance "the days of old," and in them his "songs in the night," or the sweet refreshment he had in spiritual converse with God in former times. I have known one in the depth of distress and darkness of mind, who, going through temptation to destroy himself, was relieved and delivered in the instant of ruin by a sudden remembrance that at such a time, and in such a place, he had prayed fervently with the engagement of all his affections unto God.

Wherefore, you that are sensible of these decays, or ought so to be, take the advice of our Saviour, "Remember whence you are fallen." Call to mind the former days. Consider if it were not better with you [then] than now, when in your lying down and your rising up you had many thoughts of God and of the things of God, and they were sweet and precious unto your souls; when you rejoiced at the remembrance of his holiness; when you had zeal for his glory, delight in his worship, and were glad when they said, "Let us go to the house of God together;" when you poured forth your souls with freedom and enlarged affections before him, and were sensible of the visits and refreshments of his love. Remember what peace, what tranquillity of mind, what joy you had whilst it was so with you; and consider what you have gotten since you have forsaken God, in any measure or degree. Dare to deal plainly with yourselves. Is not all wherein you have now to do with God either form, custom, and selfishness, or attended with trouble, disquietment, and fears? Do you truly know either how to live or how to die? Are you not sometimes a terror unto yourselves? It must be so, unless you are hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. What have all your lovers done for you, that you have entertained in the room of God in Christ and spiritual things? Speak plainly; have they not defiled you, wounded you, weakened you, and brought you into that condition that you know not what you are nor to whom you do belong? What are your thoughts when you are most awake, when you are most yourselves? Do you not sometimes pant within yourselves, and say, "O that it were with us as in former days."

And if you can be no way affected with *the remembrance of for-*

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mer things, then one of these two great evils you are certainly under; for either, 1. You never had *a true and real work* on your souls, whatever you professed, and so never had true and real communion with God in any duties. You had only a temporary work, which excited your affections for a season; which, now it is worn off, leaves no sweet remembrance of itself upon your minds. Had your faith and love been sincere in what you did, it were impossible but that the remembrance of their actings, in some especial instances, should be sweet and refreshing unto you. Or else, 2. You are *hardened through the deceitfulness of sin*, and there is no way left to give a sense or impression of spiritual things upon your minds. You have truly nothing left in religion but the fear of hell and trouble of duties. I speak not to such at present.

As unto those unto whom this frame is a burden, there is no more effectual means to stir them up unto endeavours for deliverance than a continual remembrance of former things, and experiences they have had of holy intercourse and communion with God. This will revive, quicken, and strengthen the things that are ready to die, and beget a self-abhorrency in them in consideration of that woful frame and temper of mind which, by their sins and negligence, they have brought themselves into.

Secondly, Consider that as there are many things dreadfully pronounced in the Scripture against backsliding and backsliders in heart, as it is with you, yet also there are especial calls and promises given and proposed unto those in your condition; and know assuredly that upon your compliance or non-compliance with them depends your everlasting blessedness or woe.

Consider both call and promise in that word of God's grace, Jer. iii. 12–14, "Go and proclaim these words toward the north, and say, Return, thou backsliding Israel, saith the LORD; and I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you: for I am merciful, saith the LORD, and I will not keep anger for ever. Only acknowledge thine iniquity, that thou hast transgressed against the LORD thy God, and hast scattered thy ways to the strangers under every green tree, and ye have not obeyed my voice, saith the LORD. Turn, O backsliding children, saith the LORD; for I am married unto you: and I will take you one of a city, and two of a family, and I will bring you to Zion." Add hereunto this blessed promise, Hos. xiv. 4, "I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely: for mine anger is turned away from him." If you design to live and not die, it must be by yielding obedience unto this call, and pleading this promise before God, mixing it with faith. Your return must be by the word, Isa. lvii. 18, 19. Here lies your great encouragement and direction, herein lieth your only relief. As you value your souls, defer not the duty

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you are called unto one moment. You know not how soon you may be without the reach of calls and promises; and he that can hear them without stirring up himself in sincerity to comply with them hath made already a great progress towards that length.

Thirdly, As unto those who on these and the like considerations do not only desire but will endeavour also to retrieve themselves from this condition, I shall give no advice at present but this, Be in good earnest. As the prophet speaks in another case, if you will return, "return and come," make thorough work of it. You must do so at one time or another, or you will perish. Why not now? Why, is not this the best season? Who knows but it may be the only time you will have for it? It were easy to multiply all sorts of arguments unto this purpose. Trifling endeavours, occasional resolutions and attempts, like the early cloud and morning dew, shifting with warnings and convictions, by renewed duties, until their impressions are worn out, will ruin your souls. Unless there be universal diligence and permanency in your endeavours, you are undone. "Then shall ye know the LORD, if ye follow on to know him."

But now to return. These things, I say, through our sloth, negligence, and sin, may befall us as unto our spiritually-renewed affections: Their progress in conformity unto spiritual and heavenly things may be slow, imperceptible, yea, totally obstructed for a season; and not only so, but they may fall under decays, and the soul therein be guilty of backsliding from God; but this is that which they are capacitated for by their renovation, this is that which the grace wherewith they are renewed doth lead unto, this is that which, in the diligent use of means, they will grow up unto, whereon our comfort and peace do depend,—namely, a holy assimilation unto those spiritual and heavenly things which they are set and fixed on, wherein they are renewed and made more spiritual and heavenly every day.

CHAPTER XVIII.

[The state of spiritual affections.]

IT remains only, as unto this head now spoken unto, that we briefly consider what is *the state of spiritual affections* thus daily exercised and improved. And this we shall do by showing,—first, What is their *pattern;* secondly, What is their *rule;* thirdly, What is their *measure*, or whereunto they may attain:—

First, The *pattern* which we ought continually to bear in our eyes, whereunto our affections ought to be conformed, is Jesus

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Christ and the affections of his holy soul. The mind is the seat of all our affections; and this is that we ought continually to design and endeavour, namely, that the "same mind be in us that was in Christ Jesus," Phil. ii. 5. To have our minds so affected with spiritual things as was the mind of Christ is the principal part of our duty and grace; nor do I think that any man can attain any considerable degree in spiritual mindedness who is not much in the contemplation of the same mind in Christ, 2 Cor. iii. 18. To this purpose ought we to furnish our minds with instances of the holy affections that were in Christ, and their blessed exercise on all occasions. The Scripture makes a full representation of them unto us, and we ought to be conversant in our meditations on them. What glorious things are spoken of his love to God and his delight in him, whence also he "delighted to do his will, and his law was in the midst of his bowels," Ps. xl. 8,—seated in the throne of his affections! What pity and compassion had he for the souls of men, yea, for the whole human kind, in all their sufferings, pains, and distresses! How were all his affections always in perfection of order, under the conduct of the spirit of his mind! Hence was his self-denial, his contempt of the world, his readiness for the cross, to do or suffer according to the will of God. If this pattern be continually before us, it will put forth a transforming efficacy to change us into the same image. When we find our minds liable unto any disorders, cleaving inordinately unto the things of this world, moved with intemperate passions, vain and frothy in conversation, darkened or disturbed by the fumes of distempered lusts, let us call things to an account, and ask of ourselves whether this be the frame of mind that was in Christ Jesus. This, therefore, is an evidence that our affections are spiritually renewed, and that they have received some progress in an assimilation unto heavenly things,—namely, when the soul is delighted in making Christ their pattern in all things.

Secondly, The *rule* of our affections in their utmost spiritual improvement is the *Scripture*. And two things are respected in them: —their *internal actings;* their *exercise in outward ways and means, whereby they are expressed.* Of them both the Scripture is the entire rule:—

1. And with respect unto the former, it gives us one general law or rule, that is comprehensive of all others,—namely, "That we love the LORD our God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength." The acting of all our affections towards God in the utmost degree of perfection is required of us; that in all instances we prefer and value him above all things; that we inseparably cleave unto him, and do nothing whatever at any time that is not influenced and directed by the love of God. This perfection, as we shall see imme-

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diately, is not attainable absolutely in this life; but it is proposed unto us as that which the excellency of God's nature requires, and which the faculties and powers of our nature were created for, and which we ought in all things to design and aim at. But the indispensable obligation of this rule is, that we should always be in a sincere endeavour to cleave unto God continually in all things, to prefer him above all, and delight in him as our chiefest good. When this frame and disposition is habitually fixed in our minds, it will declare and act itself in all instances of duties, on all occasions of trial, when other things put in for a predominant interest in our affections, as they do every day; and if it be not so with us, we shall be at a continual loss in all our ways. This is that which makes us lifeless and heartless in duties, careless in temptations or occasions of them, forgetful of God, when it is impossible we should be preserved from sin without a due remembrance of his holiness. In brief, the want of a predominant love unto God, kept in continual exercise, is the spring of all that unprofitable profession of religion that the world is filled withal.

2. There are *outward ways and duties* whereby our spiritual affections are expressed. The rule of them also is the Scripture. The way marked out therein is the only channel wherein the stream of spiritual affections doth take its course unto God. The graces required therein are to act themselves by [them]; the duties it prescribes are those which they stir up and enliven; the religious worship it appoints is that wherein they have their exercise. Where this rule hath been neglected, men's religious affections have grown irregular, yea, wild and ungovernable. All the superstitions that the world is filled withal owe their original principally unto men's affections set at loose from the rule of the word. There is nothing so fond, absurd, and foolish, but they have imbondaged the souls of men unto, nothing so horrid and difficult but they have engaged them in. And having once taken unto themselves this liberty, the corrupt minds of men are a thousand times more satisfied than in the regular exercise of them according to the word of God. Hence they will rejoice in such penances as are not without their austerities; in such outward duties of devotion as are troublesome and chargeable; in every thing that hath a show of wisdom in will-worship, and humility, and neglect of the body. Hence will all their affections be more sensibly moved by images and pictures, and a melting devotion be more stirred up in them, than by all the motives and incentives which God proposeth unto them to draw their affections unto himself. Nothing is more extravagant than the affections of men, tinctured with some devotion, if they forsake the rule of the Scripture.

Thirdly, There is considerable concerning them *the measure of*

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their attainments, or what, through due exercise and holy diligence, they may be raised unto. Now, this is not absolute perfection: "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect, but I follow after," as the apostle speaks, Phil. iii. 12. But there is that attainable which those who pretend highly unto perfection seem to be strangers unto. And the state of our affections under a due exercise on heavenly things, and in their assimilation unto them, may be fixed on these three things:—

1. An *habitual suitableness unto spiritual things upon the proposal of them*. The ways whereby spiritual things are proposed unto our minds are various. They are so directly in all ordinances of divine worship;—they are so indirectly and in just consequence by all the especial providences wherein we are concerned, by our own thoughts and stated meditations;—they are so by the motions of the Holy Spirit, when he causeth us to "hear a word behind us saying, This is the way, walk ye in it;" by holy converse with others; by all sorts of occurrences. And as the ways of their proposal are various, so the times and seasons wherein a representation of them is made unto us are comprehensive of all, at least are not exclusive of any, times and seasons of our lives. Be the way of their proposal what it will, and whenever be the season of it, if our affections are duly improved by spiritual exercises, they are suited unto them and will be ready to give them entertainment. Hence, or for want hereof, on the other hand, are tergiversations and shiftings in duties, proneness to comply with diversions, all to keep off the mind from closing with and receiving of those spiritual things which it is not suited unto. Wherefore, as unto the solemn way of proposing spiritual things unto our minds which is in and by the ordinances of divine worship, when men have a prevalent loathness to engage in them, or when they are satisfied with an outward attendance on them, but not enabled unto a vigorous stirring up of the inward man unto a holy, affectionate converse with spiritual and heavenly things, it is because they are carnal. When men can receive the fiery darts of Satan in his temptations into their bosoms, and suffer them to abide there, yea, foster and cherish them in thoughts of the lusts that they kindle, but quickly quench the motions of the Spirit stirring them up unto the embracing of heavenly things, they are carnal, and carnally minded. When providences of concernment, in afflictions, trials, deliverances, do not engage the mind unto thoughts of spiritual things, and excite the affections unto the entertainment of them, men are carnal and earthly. When every lust, corruption, or passion, as anger, envy, displeasure, at this or that person or thing, can divert the mind from compliance with the proposal of spiritual things that is made unto it, we are carnal.

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It is otherwise when our affections are conformed unto things spiritual and heavenly. Upon every proposal of these, the mind finds a suitableness unto itself, like that which a well-disposed appetite finds unto savoury meat. As "the full soul loatheth an honey-comb," so a mind under the power of carnal affections hath an aversion unto all spiritual sweetness. But spiritualized affections desire them, have an appetite unto them, readily receive them on all occasions, as those which are natural unto them, as milk is unto new-born babes.

2. Affections so disposed constantly find *a gust, a pleasant taste, a relish*, in spiritual things. They do in them "taste that the Lord is gracious," 1 Pet. ii. 3. To taste of God's goodness, is to have an experience of a savoury relish and sweetness in converse and communion with him. And persons whose affections are thus renewed and thus improved do taste a sweet savour in all spiritual things. Some of them, as a sense of the love of Christ, are sometimes as it were too hard for them, and overpower them, until they are "sick of love," and do "rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." Neither is there any of them, however condited with afflictions or mortifications, but is sweet unto them, Prov. xxvii. 7. Every thing that is wholesome food, that is good nourishment, though it be but bitter herbs, is sweet to him that is hungry. And when by our affections we have raised up in us a spiritual appetite unto heavenly things, however any of them in their own nature or in their dispensation may be bitter to flesh and blood,—as are all the doctrines of the cross,—they are all sweet unto us, and we can taste how gracious the Lord is in them. When the soul is filled with earthly things, the love of this world, or when the appetite is lost by spiritual sickness, or vitiated and corrupted by any prevalent sin, heavenly things are unsavoury and sapless, or, as Job speaks, "like the white of an egg, wherein there is no taste." There may be in the dispensation of the word a taste or pleasing relish given unto the fancy, there may be so unto the notional understanding, when the affections find no complacency in the things themselves; but unto them who are spiritually minded unto the degree intended, they are all sweet, savoury, pleasant,—the affections taste them immediately, as the palate doth meat.

3. They are a *just repository of all graces*, and therein the treasury of the soul. There are graces of the Spirit whose formal direct residence is in the understanding and the will, as faith itself, and therein are all other graces radically comprised; they grow from that root. Howbeit, the most of them have their principal residence in the affections. In them are they preserved secure and ready for exercise on all occasions. And when they are duly spiritual, there is nothing that tends to their growth or improvement, to their cherishing or

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quickening, which they stand in need of continually, and which God hath made provision for in his word, but they readily receive it, lay it up, keep and preserve it. Hereby they come to be filled with grace, with all graces,—for there is room in them for all the graces of the Spirit to inhabit,—and do readily comply with the light and direction of faith unto their exercise. When faith discerns and determines that there is any thing to be done or suffered in a way of duty unto the glory of God, the affections thus disposed do not shut up or stifle the graces that are in them, but carefully offer them unto their proper exercise.

These are some of those things which our affections, conformed unto heavenly things, will attain unto. And thus it is with affections spiritually renewed: by being fixed on things spiritual and heavenly, they are more and more conformed unto them, made like them, and become more spiritual and heavenly themselves.

It is not thus with them whose affections have *only an occasional change* wrought upon them by the means before described, but are not spiritually renewed; yea, on the contrary, such persons do design to debase spiritual things, to bring down heavenly things into a conformity with their affections, which, however changed, are not spiritual, but carnal. To evince this we may observe,—

1. Their affections are *under the light and conduct of such notions in the mind and understanding* as do not give a clear, distinct representation of them in their own nature unto them: for where they are not themselves spiritually renewed, there the mind itself is carnal and unrenewed; and such a mind "perceiveth not the things of God, neither can do so, because they are spiritually discerned." They cannot be discerned aright in their own beauty and glory, but in and by a spiritual, saving light, which the mind is devoid of. And where they are not thus represented, the affections cannot receive or cleave unto them as they ought, nor will ever be conformed unto them.

2. Those notions in such persons are ofttimes *variously influenced and corrupted by fancy and imagination.* They are merely "puffed up by their fleshly minds;" that is, they are filled with vain, foolish, proud imaginations about spiritual things, as the apostle declares, Col. ii. 18, 19. And the work of fancy, in a fleshly mind, is to raise up such images of spiritual things as may render them suitable unto natural, unrenewed affections.

3. This, in the progress of it, produceth *superstition*, false worship, and idolatry; for they are all of them an attempt to represent spiritual things in a way suited unto carnal, unrenewed affections. Hence men suppose themselves to be excited by them unto love, joy, fear, delight in the things themselves, when they all respect that false

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representation of them whereby they are suited unto them as carnal. These have been the spring of all false worship and idolatry in the Christian world.

1. The mind and affections have been changed and tinctured with *devotion* by some of the means we have before insisted on. Herein they will, one way or other, be exercised about spiritual things, and are ready to receive impressions from any thing that superstition can impose upon them.

2. They are, by error and false information, set at liberty from *the only rule* of their actings and exercise; that is, the word of God. Men satisfied themselves, that so their affections were engaged about things spiritual and heavenly, it was no matter at all whether the way of their exercise was directed by the Scripture or no. Having thus lost their guide and their way, every "ignis fatuus," every wandering meteor, allures them to follow its conduct into foolish superstitions. Nothing almost is so ridiculous, nothing so horrid and difficult, that they will not embrace under the notion of things spiritual and heavenly.

3. The carnal minds of men, having no proper, distinct apprehensions and notions of spiritual things in their own nature, do endeavour to represent them under *such notions and images* as may suit them unto their carnal, unrenewed affections; for it is implanted almost indelibly upon them, that the end of all knowledge of spiritual things is to propose them unto the embraces of the affections.

It were easy to manifest that from these three corrupt springs arose that flood of idolatry and false worship which spread itself over the church of Rome, and with whose machinations the minds of men are yet too much replenished.

4. Where it is not thus, yet carnal affections do variously *debase spiritual things*, to bring them into a conformity with themselves; and this may proceed so far, until men think wickedly that God is altogether like unto themselves. But I shall not insist on these things any farther.

Lastly, Where affections are spiritually renewed, *the person of Christ is the centre of them;* but where they are changed only, they tend unto an end in self. Where the "new man" is put on, "Christ is all, and in all," Col. iii. 10, 11. He is the spring, by his Spirit, that gives them life, light, and being; and he is the ocean that receives all their streams. God, even the Father, presents not himself in his beauty and amiableness as the object of our affections, but as he is in Christ, acting his love in him, 1 John iv. 8, 9. And as unto all other spiritual things, renewed affections cleave unto them according as they derive from Christ and lead unto him; for he is unto them "all, and in all." It is he whom the souls of his saints do love for himself, for his own

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sake, and all other things of religion in and for him. The air is pleasant and useful, that without which we cannot live or breathe; but if the sun did not enlighten it and warm it with its beams, if it were always one perpetual night and cold, what refreshment could be received by it? Christ is the "Sun of Righteousness," and if his beams do not quicken, animate, and enlighten, the best, the most necessary duties of religion, nothing desirable would remain in them. This is the most certain character of affections spiritually renewed: They can rest in nothing but in Christ; they fix on nothing but what is amiable by a participation of his beauty; and in whatever he is, therein do they find complacency. It is otherwise with them whose affections may be changed but are not renewed. The truth is,—and it may be made good by all sorts of instances,—that Christ, in the mystery of his person and in the glory of his mediation, is the only thing that they dislike in religion. False representations of him by images and pictures they may embrace and delight in; false notions of his present glory, greatness, and power may affect them; a worship of their own devising they may give unto him, and please themselves in it; corrupt opinions concerning his office and grace may possess their minds, and they may contend for them: but those who are not spiritually renewed cannot love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, yea, they have an inward, secret aversation from the mystery of his person and his grace. It is self which all their affections centre in, the ways whereof are too long here to be declared.

This is the first thing that is required to render our affections in such a state and condition as that from and by them we may be spiritually minded,—namely, that they themselves are spiritually and savingly renewed.

The things that remain will admit of a speedy despatch, as I suppose.

CHAPTER XIX.

[The true notion and consideration of spiritual and heavenly things.]

II. THE second thing required that we may be spiritually minded, as unto the interest of our affections therein, is, *the object of them about which they are conversant and whereunto they do adhere.* What this is materially, or what are the spiritual things which our affections are to be set upon, hath been declared already, under the consideration of the objects of our thoughts and meditations, for they are the same; yea, as hath been intimated, the fixing of our affections upon them is the spring and cause of our thoughts about

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them. But that which we shall now inquire into is, *the true notion and consideration of spiritual and heavenly things*, that which renders them the formal, proper object of spiritual affections, and is the reason of their adherence unto them; for, as was intimated before, men may have false notions of spiritual things, under which they may like them and embrace them with unrenewed affections. Wherefore we shall inquire into some of those considerations of heavenly things under which *affections spiritually renewed* do satisfactorily cleave unto them with *delight and complacency*.

1. And the first is, that as they comprehend God in Christ, and all other things as deriving from him and tending unto him, they have *an infinite beauty, goodness, and amiableness in them, which are powerfully attractive of spiritual affections*, and which alone are able to fill them, to satisfy them, to give them rest and acquiescency. Love is the most ruling and prevalent affection in the whole soul; but it cannot be fixed on any object without an apprehension, true or false, of an amiableness and desirableness in it, from a goodness suitable unto all its desires.

And our fear, so far as it is spiritual, hath divine goodness for its object, Hosea iii. 5. Unless this be that which draws our hearts unto God and the things of God, in all pretence of love unto him, men do but frame idols to themselves "according to their own understanding," as the prophet speaks, Hosea xiii. 2. Wherefore, that our affections may cleave unto spiritual things in a due manner, three things are required:—

(1.) That we apprehend and do find a *goodness*, a *beauty*, and thence *an amiableness* and desirableness, in them, Zech. ix. 17. Many pretend to love God and spiritual things, but they know not why. Why they love other things they know well enough, but why they love God they cannot tell. Many are afraid of him, and suppose they ought to love him, and therefore pretend so to do, though indeed they know they do not; they do but flatter him with their lips, when their hearts are far from him. Some are much affected with the benefits and mercies they receive from him, and suppose that they love him on that account; but this love is no other but what the devil falsely charged Job withal, chap. i. 8–11. Some have delight in the outward modes and rites of divine worship, wherewith they satisfy themselves that they love God and spiritual things, when they only please their own imaginations and carnal minds. Many have a traditional apprehension that they ought to love God, they know no reason why they should not, they know it will be ill for them if they do not; and these take it for granted that they do. How few are there who have that spiritual discerning and apprehension of the divine excellencies, that view of the excellency of the

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goodness and love of God in Christ, as thereby alone to be drawn after him, and to delight in him! yet is this the ground of all sincere, real love unto God. Two things are required that we may apprehend an amiable goodness in any thing, and cleave unto it with sincere affection:—[1.] *A real worth or excellency in itself;* [2.] *A suitableness therein unto our condition,* state, and desires after rest and blessedness. The first of these is in God, from what he is in himself; the latter is from what he is unto us in Christ;—from both he is the only suitable object unto our affections. Under this apprehension do we love God for himself, or for his own sake, but not exclusively unto our own advantage therein; for a desire of union and enjoyment, which is our only advantage, is inseparable from this love.

It may be, some cannot say that a distinct apprehension of these things was the first foundation and cause of their love to God; yet are they satisfied that they do love him in sincerity, with all their souls. And I say it may be so. God sometimes casts the skirt of his own love over the heart of a poor sinner, and efficaciously draws it unto himself, without a distinct apprehension of these things, by a mere sense of the love it hath received. So Elijah passed by Elisha, and cast his mantle upon him, as a transient act; but there was such a communication of virtue thereby that he ran after him, and would not be deferred, though Elijah said, "Go back again; for what have I done to thee?" 1 Kings xix. 19, 20. When God hath so cast his love on any soul, it follows after him with all its affections. And whereas God may seem at some times to say, "Go back again; for what have I done unto thee?" its answer is, "Lord, whither shall I go? I cannot leave thee; my heart is given up unto thee, and shall never be taken from thee."

But I say unto such, and to all others, that if we would have refreshing evidences of our love unto God that it is sincere, if we would have it thrive and flourish, be fervent and constant, we are to exercise ourselves unto the contemplation of the divine goodness, and the suitableness of it unto our souls, in and by Jesus Christ. Nor can we cleave unto any spiritual thing whatever with sincere affection but under these notions of it:—first, That it hath a *real worth or excellency* in itself; secondly, That it is *suitable and desirable* unto us. And it is to be bewailed to see how many walk at random in profession, that know neither what they do nor where they go.

(2.) As we must see *a goodness and profitableness* in spiritual things *absolutely,* so as that we may fix our affections on them in a due manner, so we must see it *comparatively,* with respect unto all other things, which gives them a preference in our affections before and above them all. The trial of love lies in the *prevailing degree,*—

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on more or less. If we love other things, father, mother, houses, lands, possessions, more than Christ, we do not love him at all. Nor is there any equality allowed in this matter, that we may equally love temporal and spiritual things. If we love not Christ more than all these things, we love him not at all. Wherefore, that our affections may cleave unto them in a due manner, we must see an excellency in things spiritual and heavenly, rendering them more desirable than all other things whatever.

With what loving countenances do men look upon their temporal enjoyments! with what tenacious embraces do they cleave unto them! They see that in them which is amiable, which is desirable and suitable unto their affections. Let them pretend what they please, if they see not a greater goodness, that which is more amiable, more desirable, in spiritual things, they love them not in a due manner; it is temporal things that have the rule of their affections. One psalmist prefers "Jerusalem before his chief joy," Ps. cxxxvii. 6. Another affirms that "the law of God's mouth was better unto him than thousands of gold and silver," Ps. cxix. 72. "More to be desired are the statutes of the LORD than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honey-comb," Ps. xix. 10. "For wisdom is better than rubies; and all the things that may be desired are not to be compared to it," Prov. viii. 11. This is the only stable foundation of all divine affections. A spiritual view and judgment of a goodness, an excellency in them, incomparably above whatever is in the most desirable things of this world, are required thereunto. And if the affections of many pretending highly to them should come to be weighed in this balance, I fear they would be found light and wanting. However, it is the duty of them who would not be deceived in this matter,—which is of eternal importance,—to examine what is that goodness and excellency which is in spiritual things, which they desire in them, upon the account whereof they do sincerely value and esteem them above all things in this world whatever. And let not any deceive themselves with vain words and pretences. Whilst their esteem and valuation of present enjoyments doth evidently engage all their affections, their care, their diligence, their industry, so as that a man of a discerning spirit may even feel them turned into self; whilst they are cold, formal, negligent about spiritual things,—we must say, "How dwelleth the love of God in them?" Much more when we see men not only giving up the whole of their time and strength, with the vigour of their spirits, but sacrificing their consciences also, unto the attaining of dignities, honours, preferments, wealth, and ease in the world, who know in their own hearts that they perform religious duties with respect unto temporal advantages, I cannot conceive how it is possible they should discern

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and approve of a goodness and excellency in spiritual things above all others.

(3.) A due consideration is required hereunto, that all *spiritual things do proceed from and are resolved into an infinite Fountain of goodness*, so as that our affections may absolutely come unto rest and complacency, and find full assured satisfaction in them. It is otherwise as unto all temporal things. Men would very fain have them to be such as might give absolute rest and satisfaction unto all their affections; but they are every one of them so far from it that all of them together cannot compose their minds in rest and peace for one hour. They give sometimes a transport of affections, and seem for a season to have filled the whole soul, so as it hath no leisure to consider their emptiness and vanity: but a little composure of men's thoughts shows that they are but a diversion in a journey or labour; they are no rest. Hence are they called "broken cisterns, that can hold no water." Let a man prize them at the highest rate that it is possible for a rational creature to be seduced into the thoughts of, whereof there have been prodigious instances; let him possess them in abundance, beyond what ever any man enjoyed in this world or his own imagination could beforehand reach unto; let him be assured of the utmost peaceable continuance in the enjoyment of them that his and their natures are capable of, —yet would he not dare to pretend that all his affections were filled and satisfied with them, that they afforded him perfect rest and peace. Should he do so, the working of his mind every day would convince him of his falsehood and his folly.

But all spiritual things derive from and lead unto that which is infinite; which is therefore able to fill all our affections, and to give them full satisfaction with rest and peace. They all lead us to the Fountain of living waters, the eternal Spring of goodness and blessedness.

I do not say that our affections do attain unto this full rest and satisfaction in this life; but what they come short of herein ariseth not from any defect in the things themselves to give this rest and satisfaction, as it is with the whole world, but from the weakness of our affections themselves, which are in part only renewed, and cannot take in the full measures of divine goodness, which in another world they will receive. But whilst we are here, the more we receive them in our minds and souls, the more firmly we adhere unto them, the nearer approaches we make unto our rest and centre.

2. Spiritual things are to be considered as they are *filled with divine wisdom*. I speak not of God himself, whose essential wisdom is one of the most amiable excellencies of his holy nature, but of all the effects of his will and grace by Jesus Christ. All spiritual truths, all spiritual and heavenly things, whereby God reveals and communi-

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cates himself unto the souls of men, and all the ways and means of our approach unto him in faith and obedience through Christ Jesus, I now intend. All these are filled with divine wisdom. See 1 Cor. ii. 7; Eph. iii. 10, i. 8, 9. Now, wisdom in itself and in all the effects of it is attractive of rational affections. Most men are brutish in them and their actings, for the most part pouring them out on things fleshly, sensual, and carnal; but where they are at all reduced under the conduct of reason, nothing is so attractive of them, so suited unto them, which they delight in, as that which hath at least an appearance of wisdom. *A wise and good man* doth command the affections of others; unless it be their interest to hate and oppose him, as commonly it is. And where there is true wisdom in the conduct of civil affairs, sober men cannot but approve of it, like it, delight in it; and men of understanding do bewail the loss of it, since craft, falsehood, treachery, and all sorts of villany, have driven it out of the world. So is divine wisdom attractive of divine, gracious affections. The psalmist declares his admiration of and delight in the works of God, because he hath "made them all in wisdom," Ps. civ. 24. Those characters of divine wisdom which are upon them, which they are filled with, draw the souls of men into a delightful contemplation of them. But all the treasures, all the glory of this wisdom are laid up and laid forth in the great spiritual things of the gospel, in the mystery of God in Christ, and the dispensation of his grace and goodness unto us by him. The consideration hereof fills the souls of believers with holy admiration and delight, and thereon they cleave unto them with all their affections. When we see there is light in them, and all other things are in darkness, that wisdom is in them, in them alone, and all other things are filled with vanity and folly, then are our souls truly affected with them, and do rejoice in them with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

Unto the most this wisdom of God is foolishness. It was so of old, as the apostle testifieth, 1 Cor. i. 23, 24; and so it continues yet to be. And therefore is the mystery of the gospel despised by them; they can see neither form nor comeliness in it for which it should be desired. Nor will ever any man have sincere spiritual affections unto spiritual things who hath not a spiritual view of the wisdom of God in them.

This is that which attracts our souls by holy admiration unto unspeakable delight. And the reason why men do so generally decline from any love unto the gospel, and lose all satisfaction in the mystery of it, is because they are not able to discern that infinite wisdom which is the spring, life, and soul of it. When our minds are raised unto the admiration of this wisdom in divine revelations, then will our affections cleave unto the things that are revealed.

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3. The acting of our affections in their adherence unto spiritual things is *perfective of our present state and condition.* That which of all other things doth most debase the nature of man, wherein it makes the nearest approaches unto brutality, yea, whereby it becomes in some respects more vile than the nature of beasts, is the giving up of the affections unto things sensual, unclean, base, and unworthy of its more noble principles. Hence are men said to "debase themselves unto hell," Isa. lvii. 9. And their affections do become vile, so as that their being under the power of them is an effect of revenging justice, punishing men for the worst of sins, Rom. i. 26. There is nothing more vile, nothing more contemptible, nothing more like to beasts in baseness and to hell in punishment, than is the condition of them who have enslaved their nature unto brutish, sensual affections. I say, vile affections, fixed on and cleaving unto sensual objects, do debase the nature of man, and do both corrupt and enslave all the more noble faculties of it; the very consciences and minds of men are defiled by them. If you see a man whose affections are set inordinately on any thing here below, it is easy to discern how he goes off from his native worth, and debaseth himself therein.

But the fixing of spiritual affections on spiritual objects is perfective of our present state and condition; not that we can attain perfection by it, but that therein our souls are in a progress towards perfection. This may be granted. Look, how much vile affections, fixed on and furiously pursuing things carnal and sensual, do debase our nature beneath its rational constitution, and make it degenerate into bestiality; so much spiritual affections, fixed on and cleaving unto things spiritual and heavenly, do exalt our nature above its mere natural capacity, making an approach unto the state of angels and of just men made perfect. And as brutish affections, when they have the reins, as they say, on their necks, and are pursued with delight and greediness, do darken the mind, and disturb all the rational powers of the soul (for "whoredom and wine and new wine take away the heart," as the prophet speaks, and wickedness altereth the understanding): so holy affections fixed on spiritual things do elevate, raise, and enlighten the mind with true wisdom and understanding; for the "fear of the LORD, that is wisdom, and to depart from iniquity, that is understanding." And again, as the power of vile affections fills the soul and conscience with tumult, disorder, fear, and shame, where men are not utterly profligate, so as that the minds, thoughts, and consciences of persons under their power is a very hell for confusion and troubles: so spiritual affections, duly exercised on their proper objects, do preserve all things in order in the whole soul; they are life and peace. All things are quiet and secure in the mind; there is

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order and peace in the whole soul, in all its faculties and all their operations, whilst the affections are in a due prevailing manner fixed upon the things that are above. Hence many persons, after great turmoilings in the world, after they have endeavoured by all means to come to rest and satisfaction therein, have utterly renounced all concernment in earthly things, and betaken themselves unto the contemplation of things above, and that only. Many of them, I confess, were mistaken as to the practical part of their devotions, having various superstitions imposed on their minds by the craft of others; but they missed it not in the principle that tranquillity of mind was attainable only in setting our affections on things above. James iv. 1, "From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members?"—"Whence are all the disorders in your minds, your vexations and disquietments, your passions, breaking forth sometimes into unseemly brawlings? are they not from hence," (the question is put unto yourselves and your own consciences,) "namely, from your lusts,—that is, the disorderly affections that tumultuate in you? Do but search yourselves, and you will quickly see whence all your troubles and disquietments do arise. Your lusts, or corrupt and inordinate affections, do war in you, continually inclining you to things earthly or sensual." Hence many are best and most at quiet when they are in the world, worst when at home in their families; but never are they in such confusion as when they are forced to retire into themselves.

The due exercise of our affections on heavenly things hath quite another tendency and effect. It so *unites the mind unto them*, it so bringeth them unto it, and gives them such a subsistence in it, as that all the powers and faculties of it are in a progress towards their perfection. See 2 Cor. vii. 1. True wisdom and understanding, with soundness of judgment in eternal things in the mind, holiness in the affections themselves, liberty in the will, power in the heart, and peace in the conscience, do in their measures all ensue hereon. Whatever tastes we may have of these things, whatever temporary experience we have of them, they will not flourish in us, they will not abide with us in any constancy, unless we are thus spiritually minded.

4. In the *future enjoyment* of the present objects of our spiritual affections doth our *eternal blessedness consist*. All men who are convinced of a future eternal condition do desire, when they depart hence, to enter into blessedness and glory. Howbeit, what that blessedness is, even as unto the general nature of it, they know nothing at all; and if they did, they would not know how to desire it: for heaven or blessedness is nothing but the full enjoyment of what we are here to love and delight in above all, of that which is the object of our affections as spiritually renewed. Herein have they neither

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interest nor concern. But this is that which giveth life unto the affections of believers; they know that in the enjoyment of God in Christ their eternal blessedness doth consist. How this is their happiness and glory, how it will give them an everlasting, overflowing satisfaction and rest, they understand in the first-fruits of it which they here receive. And this is the ultimate object of their affections in this world, and they go forth unto all other spiritual things in order hereunto. The more, therefore, their affections are fixed on them, the more they are kept up unto that due exercise, the nearer approaches they make unto this blessed state. When their minds are possessed with this persuasion, when it is confirmed in them by daily experience of that sweetness, rest, and satisfaction, which they find in cleaving unto God with fervent love and delight, in vain shall any other objects rise up in competition to draw them off unto themselves. The more we love God, the more like we are unto him, and the more near the enjoyment of him.

CHAPTER XX.

[The application of the soul unto spiritual objects.]

III. HAVING considered the nature of spiritual affections as renewed by grace, and those notions of their objects under which they cleave unto them, it remains only that we inquire into *the way of the soul's application of itself unto those objects by its affections*, which belongs also unto our being spiritually minded; and I shall give an account hereof in some few particulars, with brief observations on them:—

1. It is required that our adherence unto all spiritual things *with love and delight be firm and stable*. The affections are the powers and instruments of the soul, whereby it makes application unto any thing without itself, and cleaves unto it. This is their nature and use with reference unto things spiritual. Transient thoughts of spiritual things, with vanishing desires, may rise out of present convictions, as they did with them who cried out unto our Saviour, "Lord, evermore give us this bread," and immediately left him. Such occasional thoughts and desires are common unto all sorts of men, yea, the worst of them: "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my end be like his!" Fading satisfaction, with joy and delight, do often befall men in their attendance on the word, who yet never come to have it rooted in their hearts.

There are sundry things wanting unto the sincerity of these affections:—

(1.) Those in whom they are never had *a clear spiritual view of*

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the things themselves in their own nature which they pretend to be affected withal.

(2.) They have not a *sincere love* unto them and delight in them for their own sakes, but are only affected with some outward circumstances and concernments of them.

(3.) They find not a *suitableness* in them unto the ruling principles of their minds. They do not practically, they cannot truly say, "The yoke of Christ is easy, and his burden is light; his commandments are not grievous;" or, with the psalmist, "O how love I thy law!"

(4.) Their affections are *transient*, unstable, vanishing, as unto their exercise and operations. They are on and off; now pleased and anon displeased; earnest for a little while, and then cold and indifferent. Hence the things which they seem to affect have no transforming efficacy upon their souls; they dwell not in them in their power.

But where our affections unto spiritual things are sincere, where they are the true, genuine application of the soul and adherence unto them, they are firm and stable; love and delight are kept up unto such a constant exercise as renders them immovable. This is that which we are exhorted unto, 1 Cor. xv. 58, "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord." Transient affections, with their occasional operations, deceive multitudes; ofttimes they are as pregnant in their actions as those that are most sincere; and many effects, in joys, in mournings, in complaints, they will produce, especially when excited by any outward affliction, sickness, and the like;—but their goodness is like the early cloud or morning dew. Let none, therefore, please themselves with the operations of transient affections with respect unto spiritual things, be they never so urgent, or so pleasant, or so frequent in their returns; those that are sincere are at all times firm and stable.

2. That the soul do *find a spiritual relish and savour in the things* which it so adheres unto. The affections are the palate of the soul, whereby it tastes of all things which it receiveth or refuseth, and it will not long cleave unto any thing which they find not a savour and relish in. Something was spoken before of that sweetness which is in spiritual things, and the taste of them consists in a gracious sense of their suitableness unto the affections, inclinations, and dispositions of the mind. Hence they have no relish unto men of carnal minds. Whoever, therefore, would know whether his affections do sincerely adhere unto spiritual things, let him examine what relish, what sweetness, what savour he findeth in them. When he

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is pleased with them, as the palate with suitable and proper food, when he finds that he receives nourishment by them in the inward man, then doth he adhere unto them in a due manner.

This spiritual taste is the ground of all experience. It is not what we have heard or understood only, but what we have tried and tasted, whereof we have experience. This makes us long for what we have formerly enjoyed, and strengthens faith as unto what we pray for and expect.

In every darkness, in every damp of spirit, under every apprehension of deadness, or the withdrawing of the sense of divine love, the soul knoweth what it wants and what it doth desire. "Oh!" saith such an one, "that it were now with me as in former days. I know he who then gave me such refreshing tastes of his own goodness, who made every thing of himself sweet and pleasant unto me, can renew this work of his grace towards me; he can give me a new spiritual appetite and relish, he can make all spiritual things savoury unto me again."

As a man under a languishing sickness, or when he is chastened with strong pain, so as that his soul abhorreth bread and his daily meat, can remember what appetite he had, with what gust and relish he was wont to take in his food in the days of his health, which makes him to know that there is such a condition, and to desire a return unto it; so is it with a sin-sick soul. It can find no relish, no gust, no sweetness, in spiritual things; he finds no savour in the bread of the word, nor any refreshment in the ordinances of the gospel, which yet in themselves are daily meat, "a feast of fat things, and of wine well refined:" yet doth it remember former days, when all these things were sweet unto him; and if he have any spark of spiritual life yet remaining, it will stir him up to seek with all diligence after a recovery. How is it with you who are now under spiritual decays, who find no taste or relish in spiritual things, unto whom the word is not savoury, nor other ordinances powerful? Call to mind how it hath been with you in former days, and what ye found in these things: "If so be," saith the apostle, "that ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious." If you have not, it is to be feared that you have never yet had the least sincere love unto spiritual things; for where that is, it will give a spiritual relish of them. If you have, how is it you can give yourselves rest one moment without an endeavour after the healing of your backsliding?

3. It is required that our affections be so set on spiritual things as to be *a continual spring of spiritual thoughts and meditations*. No man can be so forsaken of reason as to suppose that he hath any sincere affection for what he thinks little on or not at all, or that he can have a true affection for any thing which will not stir up and

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ingenerate in him continual thoughts about it. Let men try themselves as unto their relations, or their enjoyments, or the objects of their predominant lusts, and they will find how things are stated in their own minds. And, therefore, whereas all men pretend to love God, and Christ, and the ways of God, and yet know in their own hearts that they little think of them or meditate upon them, both their pretence and religion is vain. Where our affections are duly placed on heavenly things, so as that we are indeed spiritually minded, they will be a constant spring of spiritual thoughts and meditations. But this also hath been before spoken unto.

4. When our affections are thus applied unto spiritual things, they will be *prevalent and victorious* against solicitations unto the contrary, or allurements to draw them off unto any other objects. The work of all our spiritual adversaries is to solicit and tempt our affections, to divert them from their proper object. There are some temptations of Satan that make an immediate impression on the mind and conscience. Such are his injection of diabolical, blasphemous thoughts concerning God, his being, nature, and will; and the distresses which he reduceth men unto in their consciences through darkness and misrepresentations of God and his goodness. But the high road and constant practice of all our spiritual adversaries, is by the solicitation of our affections unto objects that are in themselves, or in the degree of our affection towards them, evil and sinful. Of the first are all sensual pleasures of the flesh, as drunkenness, uncleanness, gluttony, chambering and wantonness, with all sorts of sensual pleasures. Of the latter is all our inordinate love unto self, our families, and the whole world, or the things of it. Unto this end every thing in the whole world that may make provision for lust is made use of. Herein consists the nature and efficacy of most of those temptations which we have to conflict withal. Solicitations they are of our affections, to draw them off from things spiritual and heavenly and to divert them unto other things. Hereby do our enemies endeavour to beguile us, as the serpent beguiled Eve, with fair and false representations of other beloveds, that our hearts be not preserved as a chaste virgin in all their affections for Christ.

And it is almost incredible how apt we are to be beguiled by the specious pretences wherewith we are solicited.

That our affections, in the degree treated about,—suppose of love unto the world and the things of it,—are lawful and allowable, is one of the sophisms and artifices wherewith many are deluded. Hereon, provided they run not out into scandalous excesses, they approve of themselves in such a worldly frame of mind, and acting according unto it, as renders them fruitless, useless, senseless, and is inconsistent with that prevailing adherence of affections unto spiritual

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things that ought to be in us. Others are deluded by a pretence that it is in one instance only they would be spared; it is but this or that object they would give out the embraces of the affections unto, in all other things they will be entire for God: the vanity of which pretence we have spoken unto before. Others are ruined by giving place unto their solicitations with respect unto any one affection whatever; as suppose it be that of fear. In times of danger for profession, multitudes have lost all their affection unto spiritual things through a fear of losing that which is temporal, as their lives, their liberties, their goods, and the like. When once Satan and the world have gotten, as it were, the mastery of this affection, or a prevalent interest in it, they will not fail to draw all others into a defection from Christ and the gospel. "He that loveth his life shall lose it."

Wherefore, it is no ordinary nor easy thing to preserve our affections pure, entire, and steady, in their vigorous adherence unto spiritual things, against all these solicitations. Watchfulness, prayer, faith in exercise, and a daily examination of ourselves, are required hereunto. For want of a due attendance unto these things, and that with respect unto this end,—namely, the preservation of our spiritual affections in their integrity,—many, even before they are aware, die away as to all power and vigour of spiritual life.

5. Affections thus fixed upon things spiritual and heavenly will give great *relief against the remainders of that vanity of mind* which believers themselves are ofttimes perplexed withal; yea, I do not know any thing that is a greater burden unto them, nor which they more groan for deliverance from. The instability of the mind, its readiness to receive impressions from things vain and useless, the irregularity of their thoughts, are a continual burden unto many. Nothing can give the soul any relief herein, nothing can give bounds unto the endless variety of foolish imaginations, nothing can dry up the springs from whence they arise, or render the soil wherein they grow barren as unto their production and maintenance, but only the growth of spiritual affections, with their continual vigorous actings on heavenly things; for hereby the heart and mind will be so united unto them (that which the psalmist prays for, Ps. lxxxvi. 11), as that they will not be ready to depart from them, and give entertainment unto vain, empty, foolish imaginations. Thoughts of other things, greater and better than what this world can contain, will be continually arising in the mind, not to be laid aside by any solicitations of vanity: for he that is wise cannot but know and consider that the spiritual things which it exerciseth its thoughts about have substance in them, are durable, profitable, always the same; that the advantage, peace, rest, riches, and reward of the soul, lieth in them; but other imaginations, which the foolish mind is apt to give entertain-

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ment unto, are vain, empty, fruitless, and such as end in shame and trouble.

Again; the vanity of the mind in an indulgence unto foolish imaginations ariseth from, or is animated and increased by, that gust and relish which it finds in earthly things and enjoyment of them, whether lawful or unlawful. Hence on all occasions, yea, in holy duties, it will be ready to turn aside and take a taste of them, and sometimes to take up with them: like a tippling traveller, who, though he be engaged in a journey on the most earnest occasion, yet he cannot but be bibbing here and there as he passes by, and it may be, at length, before he comes to his journey's end, lodgeth himself in a nasty ale-house. When men are engaged in important duties, yet if they always carry about them a strong gust and relish of earthly things, they will ever and anon in their thoughts divert unto them, either as unto such real objects as they are accustomed unto, or as unto what present circumstances do administer unto corrupt affections, or as to what they fancy and create in their own minds; and sometimes, it may be, after they have made them a few short visits, they take up with them, and lose wholly the work they were engaged in. Nothing, as was said, will give relief herein but the vigorous and constant exercise of our affections on heavenly things; for this will insensibly take off that gust and relish which the mind hath found in things present, earthly, and sensual, and make them as a sapless thing unto the whole soul. They will so place the cross of Christ, in particular, on the heart as that the world shall be crucified unto it, losing all that brightness, beauty, and savour, which it made use of to solicit our minds unto thoughts and desires about it.

Moreover, this frame of spirit alone will keep us on our watch against all those ways and means whereby the vanity of the mind is excited and maintained. Such are *the wandering and roving of the outward senses.* The senses, especially that of the eye, are ready to become purveyors to make provision for the vanity and lusts of the mind. Hence the psalmist prays, "Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity." If the eyes rove after vain objects the mind will ruminate upon them. And another affirms that he had "made a covenant with his eyes," to preserve them from fixing on such objects as might solicit lust or corrupt affections. And it were a useful labour, would this place admit of it, to discover the ready serviceableness of the outward senses and members of the body unto sin and folly, if not watched against, Rom. vi. 13, 19. Of the same nature is the incessant working of the fancy and imagination, which of itself is evil continually and all the day long. This is the food of a vain mind, and the vehicle or means of conveyance for all temptations from Satan and the world. Besides, sundry occasions of life

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and conversation are usually turned or abused unto the same end, exciting and exercising of the vanity of the mind. Wherever our affections are fixed on spiritual things, our mind will constantly be under a warning or charge to keep diligent watch against all those things whereby that vanity which it so abhorreth, which it is so burdened withal, is maintained and excited. Nor without this prevalency in the mind will ever a work of mortification be carried on in the soul, Col. iii. 2, 4, 5.

CHAPTER XXI.

[Spiritual mindedness life and peace.]

HAVING declared wherein this duty of being "spiritually minded" doth consist, that which remains, in compliance with the text from whence the whole is educed, is to manifest how it is "life and peace," which is affirmed by the apostle. This shall be done with all brevity, as having passed through that which was principally designed.

And two things are we to inquire into:—I. *What is meant by "life and peace."* II. *In what sense to be "spiritually minded" is both of them.*

I. 1. That *spiritual life* whereof we are made partakers in this world is threefold, or there are three gospel privileges or graces so expressed:—

(1.) There is *the life of justification.* Therein the just by faith do live, as freed from the condemnatory sentence of the law. So "the righteousness of one cometh" on all that believe "unto justification of life," Rom. v. 18. It gives unto believers a right and title to life; for "they that receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Christ Jesus," verse 17. This is not the life here intended, for this life depends solely on the sovereign grace of God by Jesus Christ, and the imputation of his righteousness unto us, unto pardon, the right to life and salvation.

(2.) There is *a life of sanctification.* As life in the foregoing sense is opposed unto death spiritual as unto the guilt of it and the condemnatory sentence of death wherewith it was accompanied, so in this it is opposed unto it as unto its internal power on and efficacy in the soul, to keep it under an impotency unto all acts of spiritual life, yea, an enmity against them. This is that life wherewith we are "quickened" with Christ Jesus, when before we were "dead in trespasses and sins," Eph. ii. 1–5. Of this life the apostle treats directly in this place [Rom. viii.]; for having in the first four verses of the chapter declared the life of justification in the nature and causes of it, in

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the following he treats of death spiritual in sin, with the life of sanctification, whereby we are freed from it.

And to be spiritually minded is this life in a double sense:—

[1.] In that it is the principal *effect and fruit of that life.* The life itself consists in the infusion and communication of a principle of life,—that is, of faith and obedience,—into all the faculties and powers of our soul, enabling us to live unto God. To be spiritually minded, which is a grace whereunto many duties do concur, and that not only as to the actings of all grace in them, but as unto the degree of their exercise, cannot be this life formally; but it is that wherein the power of this principle of life doth in the first and chiefest place put forth itself. All actings of grace, all duties of obedience, internal and external, do proceed from this spring and fountain. Nothing of that kind is acceptable unto God but what is influenced by it and is an effect of it. But it principally puts forth its virtue and efficacy in rendering our minds spiritual; which if it effect not, it works not at all,—that is, we are utterly destitute of it. The next and immediate work of the principle of life in our sanctification is to renew the mind, to make it spiritual, and thereon gradually to carry it on unto that degree which is here called being spiritually minded.

[2.] It is the proper *adjunct and evidence of it.* Would any one know whether he be spiritually alive unto God with the life of sanctification and holiness? The communication of it unto him being by an almighty act of creating power, Eph. ii. 10, it is not easily discernible, so as to help us to make a right judgment of it from its essence or form; but where things are themselves indiscernible, we may know them from their proper and inseparable adjuncts, which are therefore called by the names of the essence or the form itself. Such is this being spiritually minded with respect unto the life of sanctification; it is an inseparable property and adjunct of it, whereby it infallibly evidenceth itself unto them in whom it is. In these two respects it is the life of sanctification.

(3.) "Life" is taken for *the comforts and refreshments of life.* So speaks the apostle, 1 Thess. iii. 8, "Now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord;"—"Now our life will do us good; we have the comforts, the refreshments, and the joys of it." "Non est vivere, sed valere vita." The comforts and satisfactions of life are more life than life itself. It is "life;" that is, that which makes life to be so, bringing in that satisfaction, those refreshments unto it, which make it pleasant and desirable. And I do suppose this is that which is principally intended in the words of the apostle. It is "life," a cheerful joyous life, a life worth the living. In explication and confirmation whereof it is added that it is "peace" also.

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2. "Peace" is twofold:—(1.) General and absolute; that is, peace with God through Jesus Christ, which is celebrated in the Scripture, and which is the only original spring and fountain of all consolation unto believers,—that which virtually contains in it every thing that is good, useful, or desirable unto them. But it is not here precisely intended. It is not so as to the *immediate ground and cause* of it, which is our justification, not our sanctification: Rom. v. 1, "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God." So Christ alone is "our peace," as he who hath "made peace through the blood of his cross," Eph. ii. 14, 15, Col. i. 20. Hereof our being spiritually minded is no way the cause or reason; only it is an evidence and pledge of it, as we shall see. [Nor is it so] as unto the *formal nature of it.* Peace with God through the blood of Christ is one thing, and peace in our minds through a holy frame in them is another. The former is communicated unto us by an immediate act of the Holy Spirit dwelling in us, Rom. v. 5; the latter is an effect on our minds, begun and gradually carried on by the duties we have before at large declared. The immediate actings of the Holy Spirit, in sealing us, witnessing unto our adoption, and being an earnest of glory, are required unto the former; our own sedulity and diligence in duties, and in the exercise of all grace, are required unto the latter.

(2.) "Peace" is taken for a *peculiar fruit of the Spirit*, consisting in a gracious quietness and composure of mind in the midst of difficulties, temptations, troubles, and such other things as are apt to fill us with fears, despondencies, and disquietments. This is that which *keeps the soul in its own power*, free from transports by fears or passions, on all the abiding grounds of gospel consolation; for although this be a peculiar especial grace, yet it is that which is influenced and kept alive by the consideration of all the love of God in Christ, and all the fruits of it.

And whereas "peace" includes, in the first notion of it, an inward freedom from oppositions and troubles, which those in whom it is are outwardly exposed unto, there are two things from which we are secured by this peace, which is an effect of being spiritually minded:—

[1.] The first is *offences.* There is nothing of whose danger we are more warned in the gospel than of offences. "Woe to the world," saith the Saviour, "because of offences!" All ages, all times and seasons, are filled with them, and they prove pernicious and destructive to the souls of many. Such are the scandalous divisions that are among Christians. The endless differences of opinions and diversity of practices in religion and the worship of God; the falls and sins of professors, the fearful end of some of them; the reproaches

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that are cast on all that engage into any peculiar way of holiness and strictness of life; with other things of the like nature,—whereby the souls of innumerable persons are disquieted, subverted, or infected, —are to be reckoned unto this head. Against any hurtful or noxious influence on our minds from these things, against disquietments, dejections of spirit, and disconsolations, are we secured by this peace. So the psalmist assures us: Ps. cxix. 165, "Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them." The law, or the word of God, is the only way of the revelation of God and his will unto us, and the only outward way and rule of our converse and communion with him. Wherefore, to love the law is the principal part of our being heavenly minded, yea, virtually that which comprehends the whole. To such as do so, nothing, none of those things before mentioned, nor any other of the like nature, shall be an offence, a stumbling-block, or cause of falling into sin. And the reason is, because they have such an experience in themselves of the truth, power, efficacy, and holiness, of the gospel, as that the miscarriages of men under a profession of it shall never be unto them an occasion of falling, or being offended at Christ. And I look upon it as a sign of a very evil frame of heart, when men are concerned in the miscarriages of some that have made profession, whereby they are, it may be, damaged in their outward concerns, so as that they are surprised into reflections on that religion which they profess, professing the same themselves.

[2.] The second is *afflictions*, *persecutions*, and *sufferings* of all sorts. It is known by all (it were well if it were not so well known) what disquietments, dejections, and disconsolations, these things are apt to fill the minds of men withal; what fears, troubles, sorrows, they reflect upon them. Against all these effects of them, this peace intended gives us security. It makes us to preserve a peaceable, yea, a joyous life in our conflict with them. See John xvi. 33.

Both these, as here joined together, "life and peace," do comprise a holy frame of heart and mind, wherein the souls of believers do find rest, quietness, refreshment, and satisfaction in God, in the midst of temptations, afflictions, offences, and sufferings. It is the soul's composure of itself in God, in his love in Christ Jesus, so as not greatly to be put out of order, or to be cast down with any thing that may befall it, but affords men cheerfulness and satisfaction in themselves, though they walk sometimes in the valley of the shadow of death. Such persons have that in them, abiding with them, which will give them life and peace under all occurrences.

II. Our next inquiry is, how this "spiritual mindedness" is "life and peace," or what it contributes unto them, how it produceth the frame of heart and mind so expressed. And this it doth several ways:—

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1. It is the only means on our part *of retaining a sense of divine love.* The love of God, in a gracious sense of it, as shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, is the first and only foundation of all durable comforts, such as will support and refresh us under all oppositions and distresses,—that is, of life and peace in our souls, in any condition. This God communicates by an act of sovereign grace, for the most part without any preparation for it in ourselves: "He createth the fruit of the lips; Peace, peace." But although divine love be in itself unchangeable and always the same, yet this sense of it may be lost, as it was in David, when he prayed that God would "restore unto him the joy of his salvation," Ps. li. 12; and so many others have found it by woful experience. To insist upon all that is required on our part that we may retain a gracious, refreshing sense of divine love, after it is once granted unto us, belongs not unto my present purpose; but this I say, there is not any thing wherein we are more concerned to be careful and diligent in than as unto what belongs to that end. For men who, by *a mere act of sovereign grace,* have tasted herein of the goodness of God, who have had the consolation and joys of it, to be negligent in the keeping and preserving it in their souls, is a provocation that they will at one time or other be sensible of. There is nothing doth more grieve the Holy Spirit than to have his especial work, whereby he seals us unto the day of redemption, neglected or despised; and it argues a mighty prevalency of some corruption or temptation that shall cause men willingly and by their own sloth to forfeit so inestimable a grace, mercy, and privilege; and it is that which there are but few of us who have not reason to bewail our folly in. Every intimation of divine love is an inestimable jewel, which, if safely treasured up in our hearts, adds unto our spiritual riches; and being lost will at one time or another affect us with sorrow.

And I am afraid that many of us are very negligent herein, unto the great prejudice of our souls and spiritual state. Many of such intimations are given us by the Holy Ghost through the word, which we take little notice of. Either we know not the voice of Christ in them, or do not hearken unto him in a due manner, or refuse a compliance with him, when we cannot but know that he speaks unto us. See Cant. v 2, 3. Or if we receive any impressions of a gracious sense of divine love in them, we quickly lose them, not knowing how much the life of our souls is concerned therein, and what use of them we may have in our following temptations, trials, and duties.

Now, the great means of retaining a sense of the love of God, which is the only spring of life and peace unto our souls, is this grace and duty of being spiritually minded. This is evident from the very nature of the duty; for,—

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(1.) It is the soul's preserving of itself *in a frame meet to receive and retain this sense of God's love.* What other way can there be on our part, but that our minds, which are so to receive it and retain it, be spiritual and heavenly, always prepared for that holy converse and communion with himself which he is pleased to grant us through Jesus Christ. And,—

(2.) It will *fix our thoughts and affections upon the grace and love of God,* in communicating such an inestimable mercy unto us as is a sense of his love; which is the only means for the preservation of a relish of it in our hearts. He who is in this frame of mind will remember, call over, and ruminate upon, all such gracious pledges of divine favour, as David is often remembering and calling over what he received in such places as in the "land of the Hermonites and at the hill Mizar," Ps. xlii. This is the great way whereby this treasure may be preserved.

(3.) A person so minded, and he alone, will have a *due valuation* of such intimations and pledges of divine love. Those who are full of other things, whose affections cleave unto them, do never esteem heavenly mercies and privileges as they ought. "The full soul loatheth an honey-comb." And God is well pleased when a high valuation is put upon his kindness, as he is greatly provoked by the contrary frame; which, indeed, nothing but infinite patience could bear withal. It is a high provocation of God, when men are regardless of and unthankful for outward, temporal mercies,—when they receive them and use them as if they were their own, that they were lords of them, at least that they are due unto them. Much more is he provoked with our regardlessness of the least of those mercies which are the peculiar purchase of the blood of his Son, and the effects of his eternal love and grace. He alone who is spiritually minded valueth, prizeth, and lays up these inestimable jewels in a due manner.

(4.) Such persons only know *how to use and improve* all communications of a sense of divine love. These things are not granted unto us to lie by us without any use of them. They are gracious provisions wherewith we are furnished to enable us unto all other duties, conflicts, and trials. On all occasions are they to be called over for our spiritual relief and encouragement. Hereby are they safely retained: for in the due improvement of them they grow more bright in our minds every day, and are ready for use; in which posture they are safely preserved. But these things will yet be farther manifest in the instances that ensue.

2. This frame of mind *casts out all principles* and causes of trouble and disquietment, which are inconsistent with life and peace. There are in us by nature principles of contrariety and opposition unto spiritual life and peace, with sundry things whose abode and

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prevalency in us is inconsistent with them. I shall give only one or two instances hereof:—

(1.) It will cast out all "*filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness*" from our minds. Without this we can receive no benefit by the means of grace, nor perform any duty in a right manner, James i. 27. This is that which stands in direct, immediate opposition and contrariety unto our being spiritually minded, so as they can have no consistency in the same person; and they expel one another like heat and cold. And where there is this "filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness," there is neither life nor peace. Unclean lusts of the flesh or of the spirit, working, tumultuating, acting themselves in the minds of men, will not suffer either the life of holiness to flourish in them or any solid peace to abide with them. The soul is weakened by them as unto all spiritual actings, and made like "the troubled sea, that cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt." Where they are absolutely predominant, there is a *hell within* of darkness, confusion, and enmity against God, preparing men for a hell of punishment without unto eternity. And according as they remain or have any prevalency in us, so are spiritual life and peace impaired and obstructed by them. Now, the very nature of this grace and its universal exercise is suited to the casting out of all the relics of this "filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness." It brings in a principle into the mind directly contrary unto that from whence they do proceed. All the actings of it which we have described lie in direct tendency unto the extirpation of these causes of filthiness which ruin life and peace; nor will they by any other way be cast out. If the mind be not spiritual, it will be carnal; if it mind not things above, it will fix itself inordinately on things below.

(2.) That *disorder* which is by nature in the affections and passions of the mind, which is directly opposite unto spiritual life and peace, is cast out or cured hereby. It is a blessed promise of the times of the new testament, of the kingdom and rule of Christ, that, through the efficacy of gospel grace, "the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid," Isa. xi. 6. Persons of the most intemperate and outrageous passions shall be made meek and lowly. Where this is not in some measure effected, according unto the degrees of the prevalency of such passions in us, we have not been made partakers of evangelical grace. It were an easy task to demonstrate how the disorder of our affections and passions is destructive of spiritual life and peace. The contrariety that is in them, and contradiction unto one another, their violence, impetuousness, and restlessness, their readiness to receive and take in provocations on all occasions, and frequently on none at all but what imagination presents unto them, are sufficient evidences hereof.

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Can we think that life and peace do inhabit that soul wherein anger, wrath, envy, excess in love unto earthly things, do dwell, and on all occasions exert themselves? there where there is a continual tumult, fighting, and rebellion, as there is where the passions of the mind are not under the conduct of reason or of grace?

The nature and principal effect of this spiritual mindedness is, to bring all the affections and passions of our minds into that holy order wherein they were created. This was that uprightness wherein God made us,—namely, the whole blessed order of all the powers, faculties, and affections of our souls, in all their operations, in order unto our living unto God. And this is restored unto us by this grace, this duty of being spiritually minded. And wherein it falls short of that perfection which we had originally (for the remainders of that disorder which befell us by sin will still in part continue), it is recompensed by the actings of that new principle of gospel grace which is exercised in it; for every act of our affections towards God in the power of grace exceeds, and is of another nature, above that we could do or attain unto in the state of nature uncorrupted. Hereby are life and peace brought into our souls, and preserved in them.

3. It is that whereby *our hearts and minds are taken off from the world*, and all inordinate love thereunto. Where this is in a prevalent degree, there is neither life nor peace; and every excess in it both weakens spiritual life and disturbs, yea, destroys, all solid spiritual peace. I have occasionally spoken unto it before, as also of the way whereby our minding of the things that are above in a due manner doth deliver and preserve our souls from the snares of it. And if we diligently examine ourselves, we shall find that, in our inordinate affections and cleaving unto these things, the principal causes why we thrive no more in the power of spiritual life, and whence we meet with so many disquietments and dejections of spirit, unto the disturbance of our peace and rest in God, are from hence; for there is no grace which is not impaired by it in its nature, or not obstructed by it in its exercise. Wherefore, "to be spiritually minded is life and peace," because it subdues and expels that inordinate love unto present things which is destructive of them both and inconsistent with them.

4. It preserves the mind in *a due and holy frame in the performance of all other duties*. This also is indispensably required unto the preservation of life and peace, especially unto the improvement of them. They will not abide, much less thrive and flourish, in any persons who are negligent in holy duties, or do not perform them in a due manner. And there are four things which impede or hinder us from such an attendance unto holy duties as may be ad-

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vantageous unto our souls, against all which we have relief by being spiritually minded:—*Distractions; Despondencies; Weariness; Unreadiness of grace for exercise.*

(1.) *Distraction of mind and thoughts* hath this evil effect, which many complain of, but few take the right way of deliverance from; for this evil will not be cured by attendance unto any *particular directions*, without a change of *the whole frame* of our minds. Nothing can give us relief herein but a prevalent delight in being exercised about things spiritual and heavenly. For hence arise all our distractions; the want of fixing our minds on spiritual things with delight makes them obnoxious to be diverted from them on all occasions, yea, to seek occasions for such diversions. It is this frame alone,—namely, of spiritual mindedness,—that will give us this delight; for hereby the soul is transformed into the likeness of spiritual things, so as that they are suited unto it and pleasant unto our affections. The mind and the things themselves are thereby so fitted unto each other that on every occasion they are ready for mutual embraces, and not easily drawn off by any cause or means of the distractions so complained of; yea, they will all be prevented hereby.

(2.) *Despondencies in duties* arise from the frequent incursions of *the guilt of sin*. The remembrance hereof frequently solicits the minds of persons in their first entrances into duty, unless they are under especial actings of grace, stirring them up unto earnestness and fervency in what they undertake. At other seasons it renders men lifeless and heartless, so as that they know not whether they had best pray or no, when duty and opportunity call them thereunto. To be spiritually minded, we have manifested in many instances, is the great preservative against these disheartening incursions of sin. It is the soul's watch and guard against them, whencesoever they arise or proceed. No lust or corruption can be prevalent in a spiritual mind; and this is the principal cause of such incursions of sin as affect the soul with a disheartening sense of guilt. No affections can abide in any sinful disorder where the mind is so affected; this also gives sin an entrance unto a distracting sense of guilt. But the sole cure hereof lies in this grace and duty. The like may be said of all other ways, means, and occasions of such incursions of sin.

(3.) *Weariness in, and of, spiritual duties* abates their tendency unto the improvement of life and peace in us. This evil ariseth from the same cause with that of distraction before mentioned; and it is ofttimes increased by the weakness and indispositions of the flesh, or of the outward man. Sometimes the spirit is willing, but through the weakness of the flesh it is disappointed. The principal cure hereof lies in that delight which spiritual mindedness gives unto the soul in spiritual things; for where there is a constant delight in any

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thing, there will be no weariness, at least not such as shall hinder any one from cleaving firmly unto the things wherein he doth delight. Whilst, therefore, we are exercised in a delight in spiritual things, weariness cannot prevalently assault the mind. And it is the only relief against that weariness which proceeds from the indispositions of the outward man; for as it will preserve the mind from attending too much unto their solicitations, *crying*, "Spare thyself," by filling and possessing the thoughts with other things, so it will offer a holy violence unto the complaints of the flesh, silencing them with a sense of and delight in holy duties.

(4.) *The unreadiness of grace for its due and proper exercise* is another thing which defeats us of the benefit of holy duties. The seasons of them are come, sense of duty carries men unto an attendance unto them and the performance of them; but when they should enter upon them, those graces of faith, love, fear, and delight, wherein the soul and being of them do consist, are out of the way, unready for a due exercise, so as that men take up and satisfy themselves with the mere outward performance of them. The heart and mind have been taken up with other things; due preparation hath been wanting; men come unto them with reeking thoughts of earthly occasions; and it is no easy matter in, or immediately out of, such a frame, to stir up grace unto a due exercise. But herein lieth the very life of being spiritually minded: The nature of it consists in the keeping and preserving all grace in a readiness for its exercise as our occasions require. And this is an effectual way whereby this grace comes to be "life and peace;" for they cannot be attained, they cannot be preserved, without such a constancy and spirituality in all holy duties as we shall never arrive at unless we are spiritually minded.

Lastly, This frame of mind brings the soul unto and keeps it at *its nearest approaches unto heaven and blessedness*, wherein lie the eternal springs of life and peace. According unto the degrees of this grace in us, such are those of our approaches unto God. Nearness unto him gives us our initial conformity unto him, by the renovation of his image in us, as our presence with him will give us perfection therein; for when we see him, we shall be like unto him. He therefore alone, as he is in Christ, being the fountain of life and peace, by our drawing nigh unto him and by our likeness of him will they thrive and flourish in our souls.

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A TREATISE

OF

THE DOMINION OF SIN AND GRACE;

WHEREIN SIN'S REIGN IS DISCOVERED, IN WHOM IT IS, AND IN WHOM IT IS NOT;
HOW THE LAW SUPPORTS IT; HOW GRACE DELIVERS FROM IT,
BY SETTING UP ITS DOMINION IN THE HEART.

For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.—Rom. vi. 14.

BY THE LATE PIOUS AND LEARNED MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL,

JOHN OWEN, D.D.

LONDON: 1688.

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PREFATORY NOTE.

It appears that the following treatise was published by the widow of Owen, five years after his death; and we learn, from the preface which Isaac Chauncy prefixed to it, that the author had left it ready for the press. The most important part of it relates to the evidence by which we ascertain whether or not sin holds dominion over the heart. In the description and sifting of this evidence, the author manifests all his singular powers of spiritual analysis and discrimination.

We have had access to a manuscript which belonged to Dr Owen's friend, Sir John Hartopp, and which contains a large portion of this treatise. It serves to show how many obscure passages in the writings of Owen might have been elucidated and rendered perfectly clear, if the same advantage had been enjoyed in the preparation of his other works for this edition. The following are some instances of important corrections made on the text, as it stood in all previous editions, by the aid of this manuscript. On its authority we have altered "disavow" into "avow;" "it is that act by which the mind loads itself," into "it is that art by which the mind leads itself;" "mind" into "wind;" "sin hath not the dominion," into "sin hath the dominion," the sense of the passage, as is evident from the context, having been spoiled by the insertion of the negative; "invisible" into "irresistible;" "affairs" into "affections," etc.

ANALYSIS.

The treatise is founded on Rom. vi. 14, and three facts are presupposed in the discussion that follows:—that sin dwells in believers; seeks to renew its dominion over them; and endeavours to accomplish this object by deceit and force, chap. I.

Three leading inquiries are proposed:—I. Into the nature of this dominion; II. The evidence by which we ascertain whether it exists in us; and III. The reason or ground of the assurance that it shall not have dominion over believers.

I. As to the *nature* of this dominion,—1. It is evil and perverse, (1.) as usurped, and (2.) as exercised to evil ends. 2. It implies no force contrary to the human will. 3. It implies that the soul is not under the influence of grace to any extent; and, 4. that it is sensible of the power of sin, II.

II. As to the *evidences* of this dominion,—1. Some features of character are specified which, though seemingly, are not really inconsistent with the dominion of sin. 2. Certain things are mentioned which leave the case doubtful; as when sin takes hold of the imagination. when it prevails in the affections, when there is a neglect of the means by which it is mortified, when a reservation is made in favour of any known sin, and when hardness of heart is manifested, III. Hardness of heart is specially considered, and distinguished into natural, judicial, and partial or comparative; under the head of partial hardness, there are mentioned,—(1.) Symptoms which, however evil in themselves, are not inconsistent with the existence of grace in the heart; and (2.) Symptoms which are hardly compatible with the reign of grace. And, 3. Incontestable evidences that sin has dominion over the soul are briefly mentioned, IV.

III. The *reason of the assurance* that sin shall have no more dominion over believers is, that they are "not under the law, but under grace;" because,—whereas, 1. the law gives no strength against sin, 2. confers no spiritual liberty, and, 3. supplies no motives to destroy the power of sin, and, 4. whereas Christ is not in the law,—grace imparts these blessings, and thus enables us to subdue sin, V. Two practical observations are enforced,—1. The privilege of deliverance from the dominion of sin; and, 2. The importance of securing ourselves against the dominion of sin, and not suffering it to remain long doubtful whether or not we are under it, VI.—Ed.

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TO THE SERIOUS READER.

One of the great gospel inquiries that a Christian ought to be most critical and curious in resolving to himself, upon the most impartial examination of his own heart, concerning his spiritual state and standing in grace, is, whether he be in the faith or no: which doubt can be resolved but two ways;—either by *faith itself* closing with its true objects as offered in the gospel in its *direct act* (and so it evidenceth itself, being the evidence of things not seen, as all the natural senses evidence themselves by their own acts upon their proper objects,—for he that sees the sun hath argument enough to himself that he is not blind, but hath a seeing eye, and faith, therefore, is frequently represented to us by seeing, as John vi. 40, and elsewhere;—which evidence is according to the degrees of faith, weaker or stronger, and hence carries lesser or greater assurances with it; but such as are of the highest and best nature, giving the greatest glory to the grace and truth of God, and the firmest stay to the soul in the greatest storms of temptation, being as an anchor fastened within the veil, sure and steadfast), or else *additionally*, that our joy may be full, and for farther confirmation, especially in such cases wherein our faith seems to fail us, and we are like Thomas, God hath, out of his abundant grace in the gospel, provided arguments for us to raise from spiritual sense to judge of our state and standing by. But this requires the teachings of the Spirit, and thence a spirit of discerning, experience of, and insight into, our own hearts and ways, with senses exercised by reason of use, that these grounds and arguments may be matter of comfort and establishment unto us.

I call these latter evidences *subordinate ones*, and *additional* to that of faith, [and they are] of great use by way of establishment and confirmation unto believers, provided they be not abused to sole resting and reliance upon them, to the great prejudice of our life of faith: for we live by faith (so must all repenting sinners when they have attained to the highest pitch of holiness in this life), and not by sense, no, not even spiritual sense; it is a good *handmaid* to faith, but no good *mistress* to it.

Moreover, trials of this nature are often of a marvellous awakening and convincing nature unto poor secure sinners, formal and hypocritical professors, for many of them hold true with great demonstration in the negative: 1 John iii. 14, "He that loveth not his brother abideth in death;" and verse 10, "In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother." Now, these tests come upon an unregenerate man as clear and strong convictions of his undone estate, when, by gospel light shining into his dark heart, it evidently appears that there is a total absence of such eminent graces as are inseparable from a child of God. But when a poor, broken-hearted, self-condemning sinner comes to try himself by these tests, especially under great temptation, he chargeth all that he finds in himself for hypocrisy, formality, and sin, sits altogether in darkness in respect of these sparks of internal light, and is fain at last, when he hath broken all his flints and worn out all his steel in compassing himself about with sparks of his own kindling, to turn unto Christ by faith, "as a prisoner of hope,"

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believing in hope against hope, and from him to fetch, by a direct act of faith, as from the Sun of righteousness, all his light of life and comfort; and then he will be able to light all his small tapers, yea, all inferior arguments of his good estate will flow in with much enlargement and increase of consolation, as streams of living water flowing forth of the fountain set open for sin and for uncleanness into the belly of the true believing sinner, receiving by faith of the fulness of Christ through the Spirit, abundantly supplying him with rivers of true, substantial, living graces and consolations, being filled with the fruits of righteousness, to the praise and glory of Christ.

Now, among disquisitions of this latter nature and use this is none of the least, *whether we are under the dominion of sin or no.* Either we are or are not. If we are, our state is most certainly dangerous, for such are under the law, and the law hath concluded all under wrath. If we are not under sin's dominion, we are in a blessed and happy estate, being under grace. For these two dominions divide the world, and every son and daughter of Adam is under one or the other, and none can be under both at the same time. Now, our being under grace can be no way better evidenced than by our being in Christ by faith: for he that is so "is a new creature, is passed from death unto life," will still be mortifying sin, the strong man in sin's dominion being cast out; and therefore faith is said to be our "victory," through the supply of all grace received from Jesus Christ. Indeed it calls for no small spiritual skill and understanding to pass a right judgment in these matters. Undoubtedly many are deceived in taking wrong measures to search out these deep things of God, taking them to belong to the mere faculties and endowments of a natural man, not considering that they are of the Spirit's revelation only. And hence it is that many poor creatures in a bondage state under the law, and therefore under sin's dominion, do work like slaves in the dunghill of their own hearts to find out some natural religion or moral goodness in themselves to recommend them unto God. But such recommendation must be under the law, it cannot be under grace; and therefore such are under the dominion of sin infallibly, as the Israelites were, which "followed after the law of righteousness, but attained not to the law of righteousness. Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumbling-stone," Rom. ix. 31, 32. And it is greatly to be bewailed that many professors that sit under the means of grace are so tender of their secure and palliated consciences, that they cannot endure that the rays of true gospel light should shine directly into their hearts, being contented with a name only that they do live. They are loath to come to any narrow search or trial, lest they should be found out, and appear to themselves in their ugly shapes, whilst they are willing that all the world should have a good opinion of them; under which they cannot admit of any inward disturbances, but desire to sleep in a whole skin.

Others there are, sincere, broken-hearted believers, [who,] scared at the *rock of presumption* on which they see so many professors wrecked daily, are apt to fall upon the other extreme, and too wrongfully, to free grace, condemn themselves as being under the dominion of sin; and therefore censure themselves to be under the law and wrath, notwithstanding all their seeming faith and holiness, calling that presumption, and this hypocrisy. Hence, returning to a kind of "spirit of bondage again to fear," their faith is shaken by prevailing unbelief, their peace is broken, and all gospel ordinances rendered ineffectual, as to their true ends, of profit, edification, and comfort. Hence, though they are truly under grace, they do not know, or rather, through temptation, will not acknowledge it; but "go mourning all the day long, because of the oppression of the enemy." But I beseech such a poor soul to consider a little, and not to "receive the grace of God

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in vain." Dost thou groan under the usurpation and oppression of remaining sin? And is this the *dominion* of it? is there no difference between sin's *dominion* and sin's *tyranny* and usurpation? Dominion is upon account of right of conquest or subjection. There is upon both that sin reigns in carnal and unregenerate men, who "yield their members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin;" but you reckon yourselves dead unto sin," having no joy in its prevalency, but grief, being planted in this respect "in the likeness of Christ's death," who "died unto sin once, but dieth no more." Sin shall have no more dominion over him; "likewise reckon ye also yourselves dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord;"—that is, to be under grace, to put yourself freely and joyfully under the conduct and dominion of Jesus Christ, and to keep up a continual fight and opposition against the prevailing power of sin. Indeed, sin will often, as an outlying watchful enemy, make its assaults and incursions on the best of God's children, as it did on David, Hezekiah, Peter; and though it may make breaches upon them, it shall not have a dominion and set up a throne of iniquity in their hearts. Grace will beat out sin's throne; for indeed the words of this text,—that is, the subject of the ensuing treatise,—carry the force of a promise to the saints, to animate and encourage them to fight against sin under the banner of our Lord Jesus, the captain of our salvation, made perfect through sufferings: "For sin shall not have dominion," etc.

In treating of which text, this late learned and reverend author hath acted the part of a good workman that rightly divided the word of God (as in all his other writings of the like nature), giving every one their portion as it belongs to them, with so much perspicuity and demonstration, that if, Christian reader, thou wilt afford a little time and pains to read, meditate, dilate, and digest well, the truths here laid before thee, through the blessing of the God of all grace, thou wilt find much satisfaction and real spiritual advantage unto thy soul, either to awaken and recover thee from under the dominion of sin (the dangerous and palpable symptoms thereof being here plainly made manifest), or else to discover thy happy estate in being taken from "under the law," and brought under the dominion of "grace," whereby thou mayst assume great encouragement to thyself to proceed more cheerfully in "running the race set before thee."

It is enough to say that the author hath left his encomium firmly rooted in the minds of all pious and learned men that are acquainted with his writings, polemic or practical; yea, his renown will always be great in after generations among the churches of Christ, and all true lovers of the great truths of the gospel. And that he is the author of this small tract is sufficient to recommend it to thy most serious perusal; taking this assurance, that it was left (among other writings of great value) thus perfected for the press by his own hand, and is now by his worthy relict published for the benefit of others besides herself. I doubt not but thou wilt say that it will answer the several lines that have been drawn in thy heart by sin or grace, "as in water face answereth to face;" and that this may be the effect of thy perusal thereof, in order to thy spiritual and eternal welfare, is the hearty desire and prayer of thy unfeigned well-wisher,

J. C.[1]

[1] These are said to be the initials of Isaac Chauncy, respecting whom the reader will find a note, vol. v. p. 404.—Ed.

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A TREATISE

OF

THE DOMINION OF SIN AND GRACE.

"For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace." Rom. vi. 14.

CHAPTER I.

What sin is consistent with the state of grace, and what not—Sin's great design in all to obtain dominion: it hath it in unbelievers, and contends for it in believers—The ways by which it acts.

The psalmist, treating with God in prayer about sin, acknowledgeth that there are in all men unsearchable errors of life, beyond all human understanding or comprehension, with such daily sins of infirmity as stand in need of continual cleansing and pardon: Ps. xix. 12, "Who can understand his errors? cleanse thou me from secret faults." But yet he supposeth that these things are consistent with a state of grace and acceptation with God. He had no thought of any *absolute perfection* in this life, of any such condition as should not stand in need of continual cleansing and pardon. Wherefore, there are or may be such sins in believers, yea, many of them, which yet, under a due application unto God for purifying and pardoning grace, shall neither deprive us of peace here nor endanger our salvation hereafter.

But he speaks immediately of another sort of sins, which, partly from their nature, or what they are in themselves, and partly from their operation and power, will certainly prove destructive unto the souls of men wherever they are: Verse 13, "Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression."

This is the hinge whereon the whole cause and state of my soul doth turn: Although I am subject to many sins of various sorts, yet under them all I can and do maintain my integrity, and covenant uprightness in walking with God; and where I fail, am kept

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within the reach of cleansing and pardoning mercy, continually administered unto my soul by Jesus Christ: but there is a state of life in this world wherein sin hath dominion over the soul acting itself presumptuously, wherewith integrity and freedom from condemning guilt are inconsistent.

This state, therefore, which alone is eternally ruinous unto the souls of men, he deprecates with all earnestness, praying to be kept and preserved from it.

What he there so earnestly prays for, the apostle in the words of the text promiseth unto all believers, by virtue of the grace of Christ Jesus administered in the gospel. Both the *prayer* of the prophet for himself, and the *promise* of the apostle in the name of God unto us, do manifest of how great importance this matter is, as we shall declare it to be immediately.

There are some things supposed or included in these words of the apostle. These we must first a little inquire into, without which we cannot well understand the truth itself proposed in them; as,—

1. It is supposed that *sin doth still abide in and dwell with believers;* for so is the meaning of the words: "That sin which is *in you* shall not have *dominion over you;*" that is, none of them who are not sensible of it, who groan not to be delivered from it, as the apostle doth, Rom. vii. 24. Those who are otherwise minded know neither themselves, nor what sin is, nor wherein the grace of the gospel doth consist. There is the "flesh" remaining in every one, which "lusteth against the Spirit," Gal. v. 17; and it adheres unto all the faculties of our souls, whence it is called the "old man," Rom. vi. 6, in opposition unto the renovation of our minds and all the faculties of them, called the "new man," Eph. iv. 24, or "new creature" in us; and there is *πρόνοια τῆς σαρκὸς εἰς ἐπιθυμίας*, Rom. xiii. 14,— a continual working and provision to fulfil its own lusts: so that it abides in us in the way of a dying, decaying habit, weakened and impaired; but acting itself in inclinations, motions, and desires, suitable unto its nature.

As Scripture and experience concur herein, so a supposition of it is the only ground of the whole doctrine of *evangelical mortification.* That this is a duty, a duty incumbent on believers all the days of their lives, such a duty as without which they can never perform any other in a due manner, will not be denied by any, but either such as are wholly under the power of atheistical blindness, or such as by the fever of spiritual pride have lost the understanding of their own miserable condition, and so lie dreaming about absolute perfection. With neither sort are we at present concerned. Now, the first proper object of this mortification is this sin that dwells in us. It is the "flesh" which is to be "mortified," the "old man" which is to be

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"crucified," the "lusts of the flesh," with all their corrupt inclinations, actings, and motions, that are to be destroyed, Col. iii. 5; Rom. vi. 6; Gal. v. 24. Unless this be well fixed in the mind, we cannot understand the greatness of the grace and privilege here expressed.

2. It is supposed that *this sin*, which, in the remainders of it, so *abides* in believers in various degrees, may put forth its power in them to obtain victory and dominion over them. It is first supposed that it hath this dominion in some, that it doth bear rule over all unbelievers, all that are under the law; and then that it will strive to do the same in them that believe and are under grace: for, affirming that it shall not have dominion over us, he grants that it may or doth contend for it, only it shall not have success, it shall not prevail. Hence it is said to fight and war in us, Rom. vii. 23, and to war against our souls, 1 Pet. ii. 11. Now, it thus fights, and wars, and contends in us for dominion, for that is the end of all war; whatever fights, it doth it for *power* and rule.

This, therefore, is the general design of sin in all its actings. These actings are various, according to the variety of lusts in the minds of men; but its general design in them all is *dominion*. Where any one is tempted and seduced of his own lusts, as the apostle James speaks, be it in a matter never so small or so unusual, the temptation whereunto may never occur again, the design of sin lies not in the particular temptation, but to make it a means to obtain dominion over the soul. And the consideration hereof should keep believers always on their guard against all the motions of sin, though the matter of them seem but small, and the occasions of them such as are not like to return; for the aim and tendency of every one of them is dominion and death, which they will compass if not stopped in their progress, as the apostle there declares, James i. 14, 15. Believe not its flatteries:—"Is it not a little one?" "This is the first or shall be the last time;" "It requires only a little place in the mind and affections;" "It shall go no farther." Give not place to its urgency and solicitations; admit of none of its excuses or promises; it is power over your souls unto their ruin that it aims at in all.

3. There are two ways whereby, in general, sin acts its power and aims at the obtaining this dominion, and they are the two only ways whereby any may design or attain an unjust dominion, and they are *deceit* and *force*, both of which I have fully described in another discourse;[1] with respect whereunto it is promised that the Lord Christ shall "deliver the souls of the poor that cry unto him from deceit and violence," Ps. lxxii. 12–14.

These are the two only ways of obtaining an unjust dominion; and where they are in conjunction they must have a mighty prevalency,

[1] See his discourse on Indwelling Sin, vol. vi.—ED.

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and such as will render the contest hazardous. There are few believers but have found it so, at least in their own apprehensions. They have been ready to say, at one time or another, "We shall one day fall by the hand of this enemy;" and have been forced to cry out unto Jesus Christ for help and succour, with no less vehemency than the disciples did at sea when the ship was covered with waves, "Lord, save us; we perish," Matt. viii. 24–26. And so they would do did he not come in seasonably to their succour, Heb. ii. 18. And herein the soul hath frequently no less experience of the power of Christ in his grace than the disciples on their outcry had of his sovereign authority, when "he rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm."

This dominion of sin is that which we have here security given us against. Though it will abide in us, though it will contend for rule by deceit and force, yet it shall not prevail, it shall not have the dominion.

And this is a case of the highest importance unto us. Our souls are, and must be, under the rule of some principle or law; and from this rule our state is determined and denominated. We are either "servants of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness," Rom. vi. 16. This is the substance of the discourse of the apostle in that whole chapter,—namely, that the state of the soul, as unto life and death eternal, follows the conduct and rule that we are under. If sin have the dominion, we are lost for ever; if it be dethroned, we are safe. It may tempt, seduce, and entice; it may fight, war, perplex, and disquiet; it may surprise into actual sin: yet *if it have not the dominion in us*, we are in a state of grace and acceptation with God.

CHAPTER II.

The inquiries for understanding the text proposed—The first spoken to, namely, What is the dominion of sin, which we are freed from and discharged of by grace.

We shall inquire into three things from the words of this text:—I. *What is that dominion of sin* which we are freed from and discharged of by grace. II. *How we may know* whether sin hath the dominion in us or not. III. What is *the reason and evidence* of the assurance here given us that sin shall not have dominion over us,—namely, because we are "not under the law, but under grace."

I. As unto the first of these, I shall only recount some such properties of it as will discover its nature in general; the particulars wherein it doth consist will be considered afterward.

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First, The dominion of sin is perverse and evil, and that on both the accounts which render any rule or dominion so to be; for,—

1. It is *usurped*. Sin hath *no right* to rule in the souls of men. Men have no power to give sin a right to rule over them. They may voluntarily enslave themselves unto it; but this gives sin no right or title. All men have originally another lord, unto whom they owe all obedience, nor can any thing discharge them from their allegiance thereunto; and this is *the law of God*. The apostle saith, indeed, that "to whom men yield themselves servants to obey, his servants they are to whom they obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness," Rom. vi. 16. And so it is. Men are thereby the proper servants of sin; they become so by their own voluntary subjection unto it. But this gives sin no title against the law of God, whose right alone it is to bear sway in the souls of men; for all that give up themselves to the service of sin do live in actual rebellion against their natural liege Lord. Hence sundry things do follow:—

(1.) The great *aggravation* of the evil of a state of sin. Men who live therein do voluntarily wrest themselves, what lieth in them, from under the rule of the law of God, and give up themselves to be slaves unto this tyrant. Could it lay any *claim* to this dominion, had it any *title* to plead, it were some alleviation of guilt in them that give up themselves unto it. But men "yield themselves" to the slavery of sin, as the apostle speaks; they reject the rule of God's law, and choose this foreign yoke; which cannot but be an aggravation of their sin and misery. Yet so it is, that the greatest part of men do visibly and openly profess themselves the servants and slaves of sin. They wear its livery and do all its drudgery; yea, they boast themselves in their bondage, and never think themselves so brave and gallant as when, by profane swearing, drunkenness, uncleanness, covetousness, and scoffing at religion, they openly avow the lord whom they serve, the master to whom they do belong. But their "damnation slumbereth not," whatever they may dream in the meantime.

(2.) Hence it follows that ordinarily all men have a *right* in themselves to cast off the rule of sin, and to vindicate themselves into liberty. They may, when they will, plead the right and title of the law of God unto the rule of their souls, to the utter exclusion of all pleas and pretences of sin for its power. They have right to say unto it, "Get thee hence; what have I to do any more with idols?"

All men, I say, have this right in themselves, because of the natural allegiance they owe to the law of God; but they have not power of themselves to execute this right, and actually to cast off the yoke of sin: but this is the work of grace. Sin's dominion is broken only by grace.

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But you will say then, "Unto what end serves this *right*, if they have not *power* in themselves to put it in execution? and how can it be charged as an aggravation of their sin that they do not use the right which they have, seeing they have no power so to do? Will you blame a man that hath a right to an estate if he do not recover it, when he hath no means so to do?"

I answer briefly three things:—

[1.] No man living neglects the *use of this right* to cast off the yoke and dominion of sin because he *cannot* of himself make use of it, but merely because he *will not*. He doth voluntarily choose to continue under the power of sin, and looks on every thing as his enemy that would deliver him: "The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject unto the law of God, neither indeed can be," Rom. viii. 7. When the law comes at any time to claim its right and rule over the soul, a man under the power of sin looks on it as his enemy, that comes to disturb his peace, and fortifies his mind against it; and when the gospel comes and tenders the way and means for the soul's delivery, offering its aid and assistance unto that end, this also is looked on as an enemy, and is rejected, and all its offers unto that end. See Prov. i. 24–31; John iii. 19. This, then, is the condition of every one that abides under the dominion of sin: he *chooses so to do;* he continues in that state by an act of his own will; he avows an enmity unto every thing which would give him deliverance;—which will be a sore aggravation of his condemnation at the last day.

[2.] God may justly require that of any which it is in the power of *the grace of the gospel* to enable them to perform and comply withal; for this is tendered unto them in the preaching of it every day. And although we know not the ways and means of the effectual communication of grace unto the souls of men, yet this is certain, that grace is so tendered in the preaching of the gospel, that none go without it, none are destitute of its aids and assistances, but those alone who, by a free act of their own wills, do refuse and reject it. This is that which the whole cause depends on, "Ye will not come to me that ye might have life;" and this all unbelievers have, or may have, experience of in themselves. They may know, on a due examination of themselves, that they do *voluntarily* refuse the assistance of grace which is offered for their deliverance: therefore is their destruction of themselves. But,—

[3.] There is a time when men lose even *the right* also. He who gave up himself to have his ear bored lost all his claim unto future liberty; he was not to go out at the year of jubilee: so there is a time when God *judicially* gives up men to the rule of sin, to abide under it for ever, so as that they lose all right unto liberty. So he dealt with many of the idolatrous Gentiles of old, Rom. i. 24, 26, 28,

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and so he continues to deal with the like profligate sinners; so he acts towards the generality of the antichristian world, 2 Thess. ii. 11, 12, and with many despisers of the gospel, Isa. vi. 9, 10. When it is come to this, men are *cast at law*, and have lost all right and title unto liberty from the dominion of sin. They may repine sometimes at the service of sin, or the consequence of it, in shame and pain, in the shameful distempers that will pursue many in their uncleanness; yet God having given them up judicially unto sin, they have not so much as a right to put up one prayer or petition for deliverance, nor will they do so, but are bound in the fetters of cursed presumption or despair. See their work and wages, Rom. ii. 5, 6. This is the most woful state and condition of sinners in this world,—an unavoidable entrance into the chambers of death. You that have lived long under the power of sin, beware lest that come upon you which is spoken of in these scriptures! You have as yet a right unto deliverance from that bondage and servitude wherein you are, if you put in your claim in the court of heaven. You know not how soon you may be deprived of this also, by God's giving you up judicially unto sin and Satan. Then all complaints will be too late, and all springs of endeavours for relief be utterly dried up. All your reserves for a future repentance shall be cut off, and all your cries shall be despised, Prov. i. 24–31. Whilst it is yet called To-day, harden not your hearts, lest God swear in his wrath that you shall never enter into his rest.

That you may be warned, take notice that the *signs* or symptoms of the approach of such a season, of such an irrecoverable condition, are,—(1.) A long continuance in the practice of any known sin. There are bounds to divine patience. The long-suffering of God for a time waits for repentance, 1 Pet. iii. 20; 2 Pet. iii. 9: but there is a time when it doth only "endure vessels of wrath fitted to destruction," Rom. ix. 22, which is commonly after a long continuance in known sin. (2.) When convictions have been digested, and warnings despised. God doth not usually deal thus with men until they have rejected the means of their deliverance. There is a generation, indeed, who, from their youth up, do live in a contempt of God. Such are those proud sinners whom the psalmist describes, Ps. x. 2–7, etc. There are seldom any tokens of the going forth of the decree against this sort of men. The appearing evidences of it are their "adding drunkenness to thirst," one kind of sin unto another, making a visible progress in sinning, adding boasting and a profane contempt of all things sacred unto their course in sin. But, ordinarily, those that are in danger of this judicial hardness have had warnings and convictions, which made some impression on them; but are now left without any calls and rebukes, or at least any sense

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of them. (3.) When men contract the guilt of such sins as seem to intrench on the unpardonable sin against the Holy Ghost; such as proud, contemptuous, malicious reproaches of the ways of God, of holiness, of the Spirit of Christ and his gospel. This sort of persons are frequently marked in the Scripture as those who at least are nigh unto a final and fatal rejection. (4.) A voluntary relinquishment of the means of grace and of conversion unto God which men have enjoyed; and this is commonly accompanied with a hatred of the word and those by whom it is dispensed. Such persons God frequently, and that visibly, gives up in an irrecoverable way unto the dominion of sin; he declares that he will have no more to do with them. (5.) The resolved choice of wicked, profane, unclean, scoffing society. It is very rare that any are recovered from that snare. And many other signs there are of the near approach of such a hardening judgment as shall give up men everlastingly to the service of sin. O that poor sinners would awake before it be too late!

2. This dominion of sin is *evil and perverse*, not only because it is unjust and usurped, but because it is always used and exercised unto *ill ends*, unto the hurt and ruin of them over whom it is. A tyrant, a usurper, may make use of his power and rule for good ends, for the good of them over whom he rules; but all the ends of the dominion of sin are evil unto sinners. Sin in its rule will pretend fair, offer sundry advantages and satisfactions unto their minds. They shall have wages for their work, pleasure and profit shall come in by it; yea, on divers pretences, it will promise them eternal rest at the close of all, at least, that they shall not fail of it by any thing they do in its service. And by such means it keeps them in security. But the whole real design of it, that which in all its power it operates towards, is the eternal ruin of their souls; and this sinners will understand when it is too late, Jer. ii. 13, 19.

Secondly, This dominion of sin is not a *mere force* against the will and endeavours of them that are under it. Where all the power and interest of sin consist in putting a force on the mind and soul by its temptations, there it hath no dominion. It may perplex them, it doth not rule over them. Where it hath dominion, it hath the force and power of a law in the wills and minds of them in whom it is. Hereby it requires obedience of them, and they "yield themselves servants to obey it," Rom. vi. 16.

Wherefore, unto this dominion of sin there is required *a consent of the will* in some measure and degree. The constant reluctancy and conquering prevalency of the will against it defeats its title unto rule and dominion, as the apostle declares at large in the next chapter. The will is the sovereign faculty and power of the soul; whatever principle acts in it and determines it, that hath the rule. Not-

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withstanding light and conviction, the determination of the whole, as unto duty and sin, is in the power of the will. If the will of sinning be taken away, sin cannot have dominion. Here is wisdom: he that can distinguish between *the impressions of sin upon him* and *the rule of sin in him* is in the way of peace. But this ofttimes, —as we shall farther see, with the reason of it,—is not easily to be attained unto. Convictions, on the one hand, will make a great pretence and appearance of an opposition in the will unto sin, by their unavoidable impressions on it, when it is not so; and disturbed affections, under temptations, will plead that the will itself is given up unto the choice and service of sin, when it is not so. The will in this matter is like the Thebans' shield; whilst that was safe, they conceited themselves victorious even in death. However, this case is determined by the light of Scripture and experience, and it is here proposed unto a determination.

Thirdly, It is required unto this dominion of sin that the soul be not under *any other supreme conduct*,—that is, of the Spirit of God and of his grace,—by the law. This is that which really hath the sovereign rule in all believers. They are led by the Spirit, guided by the Spirit, acted and ruled by him, and are thereby under the government of God and Christ, and no other. With this the rule of sin is absolutely inconsistent. No man can at once serve these two masters. Grace and sin may be in the same soul at the same time, but they cannot bear rule in the same soul at the same time. The throne is singular, and will admit but of one ruler. Every evidence we have of being under the rule of grace is so that we are not under the dominion of sin.

This, therefore, is the principal way and means which we have to secure our peace and comfort against the pretences of sin unto the disquietment of our consciences. Let us endeavour to preserve an experience of the rule of grace in our hearts, Col. iii. 15. Under a conduct and rule, whence our state is denominated, we are and must be. This is either of sin or grace. There is no composition nor copartnership between them as to rule: as to *residence* there is, but not as unto *rule*. If we can assure ourselves of the one, we secure ourselves from the other. It is therefore our wisdom, and lies at the foundation of all our comforts, that we get evidences and experience of our being under the rule of grace; and it will evidence itself, if we are not wanting unto a due observation of its acting and operation in us. And it will do it, among others, these two ways:—

1. By keeping up a *constancy of design* in living to God and after conformity unto Christ, notwithstanding the interposition of surprisals by temptations and the most urgent solicitations of sin. This is called "cleaving unto God with purpose of heart," Acts xi. 23.

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This will be wherever grace hath the rule. As a man that goeth to sea designs some certain place and port, whither he guides his course; in his way he meets, it may be, with storms and cross winds that drive him out of his course, and sometimes directly backward towards the place whence he set forth; but his design still holds, and in the pursuit thereof he applies his skill and industry to retrieve and recover all his losses and back-drivings by cross winds and storms. So is it with a soul under the conduct of grace. Its *fixed design* is to live unto God, but in its course it meets with storms and cross winds of temptations, and various artifices of sin. These disturb him, disorder him, drive him backwards sometimes, as if it would take a contrary course, and return unto the coast of sin from whence it set out. But where grace hath the rule and conduct, it will weather all these oppositions and obstructions; it will "restore the soul," bring it again into order, recover it from the confusions and evil frames that it was drawn into. It will give a fresh predominancy unto its prevalent design of living unto God in all things. It will do this constantly, as often as the soul meets with such ruffles from the power of sin. When there is a radical firmitude and strength in a cause or design, it will work itself out through all changes and variations; but when the strength of any cause is but occasion, the first opposition and disorder will ruin us. So if men's purpose of living unto God be only occasional, from present convictions, the first vigorous opposition or temptation will disorder it and overthrow it; but where this is the radical design of the soul, from the power of grace, it will break through all such oppositions, and recover its prevalency in the mind and affections. Hereby doth it evidence its rule, and that the whole interest of sin in the soul is by rebellion, and not by virtue of dominion.

2. It doth so by keeping up *a constant exercise of grace* in all religious duties, or at least a sincere endeavour that so it may be. Where sin hath the dominion, it can allow the soul to perform religious duties, yea, in some cases to abound in them; but it will take care that divine grace be not exercised in them. Whatever there may be of delight in duties, or other motions of affection, which light, and gifts, and afflictions, and superstition, will occasion, there is no exercise of faith and love in them; this belongs *essentially* and inseparably unto the rule of grace. Wherever that bears sway, the soul will endeavour the constant exercise of grace in all its duties, and never be satisfied in the work done without some sense of it. Where it fails therein, it will judge itself, and watch against the like surprisals; yea, unless it be in case of some great temptation, the present sense of the guilt of sin, which is the highest obstruction against that *spiritual boldness* which is required unto the due exer-

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cise of grace,—that is, of faith and love in holy duties,—shall not hinder the soul from endeavouring after it or the use of it.

If by these means, and the like *inseparable operations of grace*, we can have an assuring experience that we are under the rule and conduct of it, we may be free in our minds from disturbing apprehensions of the dominion of sin; for both cannot bear sway in the same soul.

Fourthly, It is required hereunto that sin make the soul *sensible* of its power and rule, at least do that which may do so, unless conscience be utterly seared and hardened, and so "past feeling." There is no rule or dominion but they are or may be sensible of it who are subject thereunto. And there are two ways whereby sin in its dominion will make them sensible of it in whom it rules:—

1. In *repressing and overcoming the efficacy of the convictions of the mind.* Those who are under the dominion of sin (as we shall see more immediately) may have light into and conviction of their duty in many things, and this light and conviction they may follow ordinarily, notwithstanding the dominion of sin. As a tyrant will permit his slaves and subjects *ordinarily* to follow their own occasions, but if what they would do come, either in matter or manner, to interfere with or oppose his interest, he will make them sensible of his power: so sin, where it hath the dominion, if men have light and conviction, will allow them ordinarily and in many things to comply therewithal; it will allow them to pray, to hear the word, to abstain from sundry sins, to perform many duties, as is expressly affirmed in the Scripture of many that were under the power of sin, and we see it in experience. How much work do we see about religion and religious duties, what constant observation of the times and seasons of them, how many duties performed morally good in themselves and useful, by them who on many other accounts do proclaim themselves to be under the dominion of sin! But if the light and conviction of this sort of persons do rise up in opposition unto the principal interest of sin in those lusts and ways wherein it exerciseth its rule, it will make them in whom they are sensible of its power. They that stifle, or shut their eyes against, or cast out of mind, or go directly contrary unto, their convictions, light in such cases will first repine, and then relieve itself with resolutions for other times and seasons; but sin will carry the cause by virtue of its dominion.

Hence two things do follow:—

(1.) A *constant repugnancy* against sin, from light in the mind and conviction in the conscience, doth not prove that those in whom it is are not under the dominion of sin; for until blindness and hardness do come on men to the uttermost, there will be in them a

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judging of what is good and evil, with a self-judging with respect thereunto, as the apostle declares, Rom. ii. 15. And herein many do satisfy themselves. When their light condemns sin, they suppose they hate it; but they do not: when convictions call for duties, they suppose they love them; but they do not. That which they look on as the rule of light in them, in opposition unto sin, is but the rebellion of a natural enlightened conscience against the dominion of it in the heart. In brief, light may condemn every known sin, keep from many, press for every known duty, lead to the performance of many, yet sin have a full dominion in the soul; and this it will evidence when it comes to the trial in those instances where it exercises its ruling power.

(2.) That miserable is their condition whose minds are ground continually between the conduct of their light with *the urgency of conviction* on the one hand, and the *rule or dominion of sin* on the other. Wherever light is, it is its due to have the rule and conduct. It is that art whereby the mind *leads* itself. For men to be forced, by the power of their lusts, to act for the most part against their light, as they do where sin hath the dominion, it is a sad and deplorable condition. Such persons are said to "rebel against the light," Job xxiv. 13, because of its right to rule in them, where it is deposed by sin. This makes most men but a "troubled sea, that cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt."

2. Sin will make those in whom it hath dominion sensible of its power, by its continual solicitation of the mind and affections with respect unto that sin or those sins wherein it principally exerciseth its rule. Having possessed the will and inclinations of the mind with the affections,—as it doth wherever its dominion is absolute,—it continually disposeth, inclineth, and stirreth up the mind towards those sins. It will level the bent of the whole soul towards such sins, or the circumstances of them. Nor is there a more pregnant discovery of the rule of sin in any than this, that it habitually engageth the mind and affections unto a constant exercise of themselves about this or that, some sin and evil way or other.

But yet we must add, that notwithstanding these indications of the ruling power of sin, they are but *few* in whom it hath this dominion that are convinced of their state and condition. Many are so under the power of darkness, of supine sloth and negligence, and are so desperately wicked, as that they have no sense of this rule of sin. Such are those described by the apostle, Eph. iv. 18, 19. And whereas they are the vilest slaves that live on the earth, they judge none to be free but themselves; they look on others as in bondage to foolish and superstitious fears, whilst they are at liberty to drink, swear, scoff at religion, whore, and defile themselves without control.

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This is their liberty, and they may have that which is as good in hell,—a liberty to curse and blaspheme God, and to fly with revengeful thoughts on themselves and the whole creation. The *light* in such persons is *darkness itself*, so be that they have nothing to rise up in opposition unto the rule of sin, whence alone a sense of its power doth arise. Others, as we observed before, living in some compliance with their light and convictions, abstaining from many sins and performing many duties, though they live in some known sin or other, and allow themselves in it, yet will not allow that sin hath the dominion in them.

Wherefore, there are two things hard and difficult in this case:—

1. To convince those in whom sin evidently hath the dominion that such indeed is their state and condition. They will with their utmost endeavour keep off the conviction hereof. Some *justify* themselves, some *excuse* themselves, and some will make no inquiry into this matter. It is a rare thing, especially of late, to have any brought under this conviction by the preaching of the word, though it be the case of multitudes that attend unto it.

2. To satisfy some that sin hath not the dominion over them, notwithstanding its restless acting itself in them and warring against their souls; yet unless this can be done, it is impossible they should enjoy solid peace and comfort in this life. And the concernment of the best of believers, whilst they are in this world, doth lie herein; for as they grow in light, spirituality, experience, freedom of mind and humility, the more they love to know of the deceit, activity, and power of the remainders of sin. And although it works not at all, at least not sensibly, in them, towards those sins wherein it reigneth and rageth in others, yet they are able to discern its more subtile, inward, and spiritual actings in the mind and heart, to the weakening of grace, the obstructing of its effectual operations in holy duties, with many indispositions unto stability in the life of God; which fills them with trouble.

CHAPTER III.

The second inquiry spoken to, Whether sin hath dominion in us or not—In answer to which it is showed that some wear sin's livery, and they are the professed servants thereof—There are many in which the case is dubious, where sin's service is not so discernible—Several exceptions are put in against its dominion where it seems to prevail—Some certain signs of its dominion—Graces and duties to be exercised for its mortification.

II. THESE things being thus premised in general concerning the nature of the dominion of sin, we shall now proceed unto our principal

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inquiry,—namely, Whether sin have dominion in us or no, whereby we may know *whether we are under the law or under grace*, or what is the state of our souls towards God. An inquiry this is which is very necessary for some to make, and for all to have rightly determined in their minds, from Scripture and experience; for on that determination depends all our solid peace. Sin will be in us; it will lust, fight, and entice us;—but *the great question*, as unto our peace and comfort, is, whether it hath dominion over us or no.

First, We do not inquire concerning them in whom the reign of sin is absolute and easily discernible, if not to themselves yet to others. Such there are who visibly "yield their members instruments of unrighteousness unto sin," Rom. vi. 13. "Sin reigns in their mortal bodies," and they openly "obey it in the lusts thereof," verse 12. They are avowedly "servants of sin unto death," verse 16, and are not ashamed of it. "The show of their countenance doth witness against them; and they declare their sin as Sodom, they hide it not," Isa. iii. 9. Such are those described Eph. iv. 18, 19, and such the world is filled withal; such as, being under the power of darkness and enmity against God, do act them in opposition to all serious godliness and in the service of various lusts. There is no question concerning their state; they cannot themselves deny that it is so with them. I speak not for the liberty of censuring, but for the easiness of judging. Those who openly wear *sin's livery* may well be esteemed to be sin's servants; and they shall not fail to receive sin's wages. Let them at present bear it never so high, and despise all manner of convictions, they will find it bitterness in the latter end, Isa. l. 11; Eccles. xi. 9.

Secondly, But there are many in whom *the case is dubious* and not easily to be determined; for, on the one hand, they may have sundry things in them which may seem repugnant unto the reign of sin, but indeed are not inconsistent with it. All arguments and pleas from them in their vindication may fail them on a trial. And, on the other hand, there may be some in whom the effectual working of sin may be so great and perplexing as to argue that it hath the dominion, when indeed it hath not, but is only a stubborn rebel.

The things of the first sort, which seem destructive of and *inconsistent with the dominion of sin*, but indeed are not, may be referred to five heads:—

1. *Illumination* in knowledge and spiritual gifts, with convictions of good and evil, of all known duties and sins. This is that which some men live in a perpetual rebellion against, in one instance or another.

2. A *change in the affections*, giving a temporary delight in religious duties, with some constancy in their observation. This also

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is found in many who are yet evidently under the power of sin and spiritual darkness.

3. A *performance of many duties*, both moral and evangelical, for the substance of them, and an *abstinence*, out of conscience, *from many sins*. So was it with the young man in the Gospel, who yet wanted what was necessary to free him from the dominion of sin, Matt. xix. 20–23.

4. *Repentance for sin committed.* This is that which most secure themselves by; and a blessed security it is when it is gracious, evangelical, a fruit of faith, comprising the return of the whole soul to God. But there is that which is legal, partial, respecting particular sins only, which is not pleadable in this case. Ahab was no less under the dominion of sin when he had repented him than he was before; and Judas repented him before he hanged himself.

5. *Promises and resolutions* against sin for the future. But the goodness of many in these things is "as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away," as it is in the prophet, Hosea vi. 4.

Where there is a concurrence of these things in any, they have good hopes, at least, that they are not under the dominion of sin, nor is it easy to convince them that they are; and they may so behave themselves herein as that it is not consistent with Christian charity to pronounce them to be so. Howbeit, the fallacy that is in these things hath been detected by many; and much more is by all required to evidence the sincerity of faith and holiness. No man, therefore, can be acquitted by pleas taken from them, as unto his subjection to the reign of sin.

The things of the second sort, whence arguments may be taken to prove the dominion of sin in any person, which yet will not certainly do it, are those which we shall now examine. And we must observe,—

1. That where sin hath the dominion, it doth indeed rule in *the whole soul* and all the faculties of it. It is a vicious habit in all of them, corrupting them, in their several natures and powers, with that corruption whereof they are capable:—So in the mind, of darkness and vanity; the will, of spiritual deceit and perverseness; the heart, of stubbornness and sensuality. Sin in its power reaches unto and affects them all. But,—

2. It doth evidence its dominion and is to be tried by its acting in the distinct faculties of the mind, in the frame of the heart, and in the course of the life.

These are those which we shall examine:—first, those which render the case dubious; and then those that clearly determine it on the part of sin. I shall not, therefore, at present, give positive evidences of men's freedom from the dominion of sin, but only consi-

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der the arguments that lie against them, and examine how far they are conclusive, or how they may be defeated. And,—

1. *When sin hath in any instance possessed the imagination, and thereby engaged the cogitative faculty in its service, it is a dangerous symptom of its rule or dominion.* Sin may exercise its rule in the mind, fancy, and imagination, where bodily strength or opportunity gives no advantage for its outward perpetration. In them the desires of sin may be enlarged as hell, and the satisfaction of lust taken in with greediness. Pride, and covetousness, and sensuality, may reign and rage in the mind by corrupt imaginations, when their outward exercise is shut up by circumstances of life.

The first way whereby sin acts itself, or coins its motions and inclinations into acts, is by the *imagination*, Gen. vi. 5. The continual evil figments of the heart are as the bubbling of corrupt waters from a corrupted fountain.

The imaginations intended are the *fixing of the mind on the objects of sin* or sinful objects, by continual thoughts, with delight and complacency. They are the mind's purveying for the satisfaction of the flesh in the lusts thereof, Rom. xiii. 14, whereby evil thoughts come to lodge, to abide, to dwell in the heart, Jer. iv. 14.

This is the first and proper effect of that *vanity of mind* whereby the soul is alienated from the life of God. The mind being turned off from its proper object, with a dislike of it, applies itself by its thoughts and imaginations unto the pleasures and advantages of sin, seeking in vain to recover the rest and satisfaction which they have forsaken in God himself: "They follow after lying vanities, and forsake their own mercies," Jonah ii. 8. And when they give themselves up unto a constant internal converse with the desires of the flesh, the pleasures and advantages of sin, with delight and approbation, sin may reign triumphantly in them, though no appearance be made of it in their outward conversation. Such are they who have "a form of godliness, but deny the power thereof;" their hearts being filled with a litter of ungodly lusts, as the apostle declares, 2 Tim. iii. 5.

And there are three evils with respect whereunto sin doth exercise its reigning power in the imagination in an especial manner:—

(1.) *Pride, self-elation, desire of power and greatness.* It is affirmed of the prince of Tyrus, that he said "he was a god, and sat in the seat of God," Ezek. xxviii. 2; and the like foolish thoughts are ascribed unto the king of Babylon, Isa. xiv. 13, 14. None of the children of men can attain so great glory, power, and dominion in this world, but that in their imaginations and desires they can infinitely exceed what they do enjoy, like him who wept that he had not another world to conquer. They have no bounds but to be as

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God, yea, to be God; which was the first design of sin in the world: and there is none so poor and low but by his imaginations he can lift up and exalt himself almost into the place of God. This vanity and madness God reproves in his discourse with Job, chap. xl. 9–14; and there is nothing more germane and proper unto the original depravation and corruption of our natures than this self-exaltation in foolish thoughts and imaginations, because it first came upon us through a desire of being as God. Herein, therefore, may sin exercise its dominion in the minds of men; yea, in the empty wind and vanity of these imaginations, with those that follow, consists the principal part of the deceitful ways of sin. The ways of men cannot satisfy themselves with what sins they can actually commit; but in these imaginations they rove endlessly, finding satisfaction in their renovation and variety, Isa. lvii. 10.

(2.) *Sensuality and uncleanness of life.* It is said of some that they have "eyes full of adultery," and that they "cannot cease from sin," 2 Pet. ii. 14; that is, their imaginations are continually working about the objects of their unclean lusts. These they think of night and day, immiring themselves in all filth continually. Jude calls them "filthy dreamers, defiling the flesh," verse 8. They live as in a constant pleasing dream by their vile imaginations, even when they cannot accomplish their lustful desires; for such imaginations cannot be better expressed than by dreams, wherein men satisfy themselves with a supposed acting of what they do not. Hereby do many wallow in the mire of uncleanness all their days, and for the most part are never wanting unto the effects of it when they have opportunity and advantage; and by this means the most cloistered recluses may live in constant adulteries, whereby multitudes of them become actually the sinks of uncleanness. This is that which, in the root of it, is severely condemned by our Saviour, Matt. v. 28.

(3.) *Unbelief, distrust, and hard thoughts of God,* are of the same kind. These will sometimes so possess the imaginations of men as to keep them off from all delight in God, to put them on contrivances of fleeing from him; which is a peculiar case, not here to be spoken unto.

In these and the like ways may sin exercise its dominion in the soul by the mind and its imagination. It may do so when no demonstration is made of it in the outward conversation; for by this means the minds of men are defiled, and then nothing is clean, all things are impure unto them, Tit. i. 15. Their minds being thus defiled, do defile all things to them,—their enjoyments, their duties, all they have, and all that they do.

But yet all failing and sin in this kind doth not prove absolutely that sin hath the dominion in the mind that it had before. Some-

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thing of this vice and evil may be found in them that are freed from the reign of sin; and there will be so until the vanity of our minds is perfectly cured and taken away, which will not be in this world. Wherefore I shall name the exceptions that may be put in against the title of sin unto dominion in the soul, notwithstanding the continuance in some measure of this work of the imagination in coining evil figments in the heart. And,—

(1.) This is no evidence of the dominion of sin, where it is *occasional*, arising from the prevalency of some present temptation. Take an instance in the case of David. I no way doubt but that in his temptation with Bathsheba, his mind was possessed with defiling imaginations. Wherefore, on his repentance, he not only prays for the forgiveness of his sin, but cries out with all fervency that God would "create a clean heart in him," Ps. li. 10. He was sensible not only of the defilement of his person by his *actual adultery*, but of his heart by *impure imaginations*. So it may be in the case of other temptations. Whilst men are entangled with any temptation, of what sort soever it be, it will multiply thoughts about it in the mind; yea, its whole power consists in a multiplication of evil imaginations. By them it blinds the mind, draws it off from the consideration of its duty, and enticeth it unto a full conception of sin, James i. 14, 15. Wherefore, in this case of a prevalent temptation, which may befall a true believer, the corrupt working of the imagination doth not prove the dominion of sin.

If it be inquired how the mind may be freed and cleared of these perplexing, defiling imaginations, which arise from the urgency of some present temptation,—suppose about earthly affairs, or the like,—I say it will never be done by the most strict watch and resolution against them, nor by the most resolute rejection of them. They will return with new violence and new pretences, though the soul hath promised itself a thousand times that so they should not do. There is but one way for the cure of this distemper, and this is a thorough mortification of the lust that feeds them and is fed by them. It is to no purpose to shake off the fruit in this case unless we dig up the root. Every temptation designs the satisfaction of some lust of the flesh or of the mind. These evil thoughts and imaginations are the working of the temptation in the mind. There is no riddance of them, no conquest to be obtained over them, but by subduing the temptation; and no subduing the temptation but by the mortification of the lust whose satisfaction it is designed unto. This course the apostle directs unto, Col. iii. 3, 5. That which he enjoins is, that we would not set our minds on the things of the earth, in opposition unto the things above; that is, that we would not fill our imaginations, and thereby our affections, with them. But what is the way

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whereby we may be enabled so to do?—that is, saith he, *the universal mortification of sin*, verse 5.

For want of the wisdom and knowledge hereof, or for want of its practice, through a secret unwillingness to come up unto a full mortification of sin, some are galled and perplexed, yea, and defiled, with foolish and vain imaginations all their days; and although they prove not the dominion of sin, yet they will deprive the soul of that peace and comfort which otherwise it might enjoy.

But yet there is much spiritual skill and diligence required to discover what is the true root and spring of the foolish imaginations that may at any time possess the mind; for they lie deep in the heart, that heart which is deep and deceitful, and so are not easily discoverable. There are many other pretences of them. They do not directly bespeak that pride or those unclean lusts which they proceed from, but they make many other pretences and feign other ends; but the soul that is watchful and diligent may trace them to their original. And if such thoughts are strictly examined at any time, what is their design, whose work they do, what makes them so busy in the mind, they will confess the truth, both whence they came and what it is they aim at. Then is the mind guided unto its duty; which is the extermination of the lust which they would make provision for.

(2.) Such imaginations are no evidence of the dominion of sin, in what degree soever they are, where they are *afflictive*, where they are a burden unto the soul, which it groans under and would be delivered from. There is a full account given by the apostle of the conflict between indwelling sin and grace, Rom. vii. And the things which he ascribes unto sin are not the first rising or involuntary motions of it, nor merely its inclinations and disposition; for the things ascribed unto it, as that it fights, rebels, wars, leads captive, acts as a law, cannot belong unto them. Nor doth he intend the outward acting or perpetration of sin, the doing, or accomplishing, or finishing of it; for that cannot befall believers, as the apostle declares, 1 John iii. 9. But it is the working of sin by these imaginations in the mind, and the engagement of the affections thereon, that he doth intend. Now, this he declares to be the great burden of the souls of believers, that which makes them think their condition wretched and miserable in some sort, and which they earnestly cry out for deliverance from, Rom. vii. 24. This is the present case. These figments of the heart, these imaginations, will arise in the minds of men. They will do so sometimes to a high degree. They will impose them on us with deceit and violence, leading captive unto the law of them. Where they are rejected, condemned, defied, they will return again while there is any vanity remaining in the mind or corruption in the affections. But if the soul be sensible of them,

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if it labour under them, if it look on them as those that fight against its purity, holiness, and peace, if it pray for deliverance from them, they are no argument of the dominion of sin; yea, a great evidence unto the contrary may be taken from that firm opposition unto them which the mind is constantly engaged in.

(3.) They are not proofs of the dominion of sin when there is *a prevalent detestation of the lust* from whence they proceed, and whose promotion they design, maintained in the heart and mind. I confess, sometimes this cannot be discovered. And all such various imaginations are but mere effects of the incurable vanity and instability of our minds, for these administer continual occasion unto random thoughts; but, for the most part (as we observed before), they are employed in the service of some lust, and tend unto the satisfaction of it. They are that which is prohibited by the apostle: Rom. xiii. 14, "Make not provision for the flesh." And this may be discovered on strict examination. Now, when the mind is fixed in a constant detestation of that sin whereunto they lead, as it is sin against God, with a firm resolution against it, in all circumstances that may occur, no proof can be thence taken for the dominion of sin.

(4.) Sometimes evil thoughts are the *immediate injections of Satan*, and they are on many accounts most terrible unto the soul. Usually, for the matter of them, they are dreadful, and ofttimes blasphemous; and as unto the manner of their entrance into the mind, it is, for the most part, surprising, furious, and irresistible. From such thoughts many have concluded themselves to be absolutely under the power of sin and Satan. But they are by certain rules and infallible signs discoverable from whence they do proceed; and on that discovery all pretences unto the dominion of sin in them must disappear.

And this is the first case, which renders the question dubious whether sin have the dominion in us or no.

2. It is a sign of the dominion of sin, when, in any instance, it hath *a prevalency in our affections;* yea, they are the throne of sin, where it acts its power. But this case of the affections I have handled so at large in my discourse of Spiritual-mindedness,[1] as I shall here very briefly speak unto it, so as to give one rule only to make a judgment by concerning the dominion of sin in them.

This is certain, that where sin hath the prevalency and predominancy in our affections, there it hath the dominion in the whole soul. The rule is given us unto this purpose, 1 John ii. 15. We are obliged to "love the LORD our God with all our heart and with all our soul;" and therefore if there be in us a predominant love to any thing else, whereby it is preferred unto God, it must be from the prevalency

[1] See the preceding treatise in this volume.—ED.

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of a principle of sin in us. And so it is with respect unto all other affections. If we love any thing more than God, as we do if we will not part with it for his sake, be it as a right eye or as a right hand unto us; if we take more satisfaction and complacency in it, and cleave more unto it in our thoughts and minds than unto God, as men commonly do in their lusts, interests, enjoyments, and relations; if we trust more to it, as unto a supply of our wants, than unto God, as most do to the world; if our desires are enlarged and our diligence heightened in seeking after and attaining other things, more than towards the love and favour of God; if we fear the loss of other things or danger from them more than we fear God,—we are not under the rule of God or his grace, but we are under the dominion of sin, which reigns in our affections.

It were endless to give instances of this power of sin in and over the affections of men. Self-love, love of the world, delight in things sensual, an over-valuation of relations and enjoyments, with sundry other things of an alike nature, will easily evidence it. And to resolve the case under consideration, we may observe,—

(1.) That the prevalency of sin in the affections, so far as to be a symptom of its dominion, is discernible unto the least beam of spiritual light, with a diligent searching into and judgment of ourselves. If it be so with any that they know it not, nor will be convinced of it (as it is with many), I know not what can free them from being under the reign of sin. And we see it so every day. Men all whose ways and actions proclaim that they are acted in all things by an inordinate love of the world and self, yet find nothing amiss in themselves, nothing that they do not approve of, unless it be that their desires are not satisfied according to their expectations. All the commands we have in the Scripture for self-searching, trial, and examination; all the rules that are given us unto that end; all the warnings we have of the deceitfulness of sin and of our own hearts,—are given us to prevent this evil of shutting our eyes against the prevalent corruption and disorder of our affections. And the issue of all our endeavours in this kind is in the appeal of David to God himself, Ps. cxxxix. 23, 24.

(2.) When men have convictions of the irregularity and disorder of their affections, yet are resolved to continue in the state wherein they are without the correction and amendment of them, because of some advantage and satisfaction which they receive in their present state, they seem to be under the dominion of sin. So is it with those mentioned, Isa. lvii. 10. Upon the account of the present satisfaction, delight, and pleasure, that their corrupt affections do take in cleaving inordinately unto their objects, they will not endeavour their change and alteration.

This, then, is the sole safe rule in this case: Whatever hold sin

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may have got on our affections, whatever prevalency it may have in them, however it may entangle and defile them, if we endeavour sincerely the discovery of this evil, and thereon set ourselves constantly unto the mortification of our corrupt affections by all due means, there is not in their disorder any argument to prove the dominion of sin in us. Our affections, as they are corrupt, are the proper objects of the great duty of mortification; which the apostle therefore calls our "members which are upon the earth," Col. iii. 5. This is a safe anchor for the soul in this storm. If it live in a sincere endeavour after the mortification of every discoverable corruption and disorder in the affections, it is secure from the dominion of sin. But as for such as are negligent in searching after the state of their souls, as unto the inclination and engagement of their affections, who approve of themselves in their greatest irregularities, resolvedly indulge themselves in any way of sin to gratify their corrupt affections, they must provide themselves of pleas for their vindication; I know them not. But the meaning of our present rule will be farther manifest in what ensues.

3. It is a dangerous sign of the dominion of sin, when, after a conviction of their necessity, it prevaileth unto *a neglect of those ways and duties which are peculiarly suited, directed, and ordained, unto its mortification and destruction.* This may be cleared in some particulars:—

(1.) Mortification of sin is the constant duty of all believers, of all who would not have sin have dominion over them. Where mortification is sincere, there is no dominion of sin; and where there is no mortification, there sin doth reign.

(2.) There are some graces and duties that are peculiarly suited and ordained unto this end, that by them and their agency the work of mortification may be carried on constantly in our souls. What they are, or some of them, we shall see immediately.

(3.) When sin puts forth its power in any especial lust, or in a strong inclination unto any actual sin, then it is the duty of the soul to make diligent application of those graces and duties which are specifical and proper unto its mortification.

(4.) When men have had a conviction of these duties, and have attended unto them according to that conviction, if sin prevail in them to a neglect or relinquishment of those duties as unto their performance, or as unto their application unto the mortification of sin, it is a dangerous sign that sin hath dominion in them. And I distinguish between these things,—namely, a neglect of such duties as unto their performance, and a neglect of the application of them unto the mortification of sin; for men may on other accounts continue the observance of them, or some of them, and yet not apply them unto

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this especial end. And so all external duties may be observed when sin reigneth in triumph, 2 Tim. iii. 5.

The meaning of the assertion being stated, I shall now name some of those graces and duties upon whose omission and neglect sin may prevail, as unto an application of them unto the mortification of any sin:—

The *first* is, *the daily exercise of faith on Christ as crucified.* This is the great fundamental means of the mortification of sin in general, and which we ought to apply unto every particular instance of it. This the apostle discourseth at large, Rom. vi. 6–13. "Our old man," saith he, "is crucified with Christ, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin." Our "old man," or the body of sin, is the power and reign of sin in us. These are to be destroyed; that is, so mortified that "henceforth we should not serve sin," that we should be delivered from the power and rule of it. This, saith the apostle, is done in Christ: "Crucified with him." It is so *meritoriously*, in his actual dying or being crucified for us; it is so *virtually*, because of the certain provision that is made therein for the mortification of all sin; but it is so *actually*, by the exercise of faith on him as crucified, dead, and buried, which is the means of the actual communication of the virtue of his death unto us for that end. Herein are we said to be dead and buried with him; whereof baptism is the pledge. So by the cross of Christ the world is crucified unto us, and we are so to the world, Gal. vi. 14; which is the substance of the mortification of all sin. There are several ways whereby the exercise of faith on Christ crucified is effectual unto this end:—

[1.] Looking unto him as such will beget *holy mourning* in us: Zech. xii. 10, "They shall look on me whom they have pierced, and mourn." It is a promise of gospel times and gospel grace. A view of Christ as pierced will cause mourning in them that have received the promise of the Spirit of grace and supplication there mentioned. And this mourning is the foundation of mortification. It is that "godly sorrow which worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of," 2 Cor. vii. 10. And mortification of sin is of the essence of repentance. The more believers are exercised in this view of Christ, the more humble they are, the more they are kept in that mourning frame which is universally opposite unto all the interests of sin, and which keeps the soul watchful against all its attempts. Sin never reigned in an humble, mourning soul.

[2.] It is effectual unto the same end by the way of a powerful motive, as that which calls and leads unto conformity to him. This is pressed by the apostle, Rom. vi. 8–11. Our conformity unto Christ as crucified and dead consists in our being dead unto sin, and thereby

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overthrowing the reign of it in our mortal bodies. This conformity, saith he, we ought to reckon on as our duty: "Reckon ye yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin;" that is, that you ought so to be, in that conformity which you ought to aim at unto Christ crucified. Can any spiritual eye behold Christ dying for sin, and continue to live in sin? Shall we keep that alive in us which he died for, that it might not eternally destroy us? Can we behold him bleeding for our sins, and not endeavour to give them their death-wound? The efficacy of the exercise of faith herein unto the mortification of sin is known unto all believers by experience.

[3.] Faith herein gives us communion with him in his death, and unites the soul unto it in its efficacy. Hence we are said to be "buried with him into death," and to be "planted together in the likeness of his death," Rom. vi. 4, 5. Our "old man is crucified with him," verse 6. We have by faith communion with him in his death, unto the death of sin.

This, therefore, is the first grace and duty which we ought to attend unto for the mortification of sin. But where sin hath that interest and power in the mind as to take it off from this exercise of faith, to prevent or obstruct it, as it will do, so as that it shall not dare to think or meditate on Christ crucified, because of the inconsistency of such thoughts with an indulgence unto any lust, it is to be feared that sin is in the throne.

If it be thus with any; if they have not yet made use of this way and means for the mortification of sin; or if, being convinced of it, they have been for any season driven or withheld from the exercise of faith herein,—I have nothing to offer to free them from this evidence of the reign of sin, but only that they would speedily and carefully address themselves unto their duty herein; and if they prevail on themselves unto it, it will bring in its own evidence of their freedom.

Some, it may be, will say that indeed they are "unskilful" in this "word of righteousness," as some are, Heb. v. 13. They know not how to make use of Christ crucified unto this end, nor how to set themselves about it. Other ways of mortification they can understand. The discipline and penances assigned by the Papists unto this end are sensible; so are our own vows and resolutions, with other duties that are prescribed; but as for this way of deriving virtue from the death of Christ unto the death of sin, they can understand nothing of it.

I easily believe that some may say so, yea, ought to say so, if they would speak their minds; for the spiritual wisdom of faith is required hereunto, but "all men have not faith." On the loss of this wisdom, the Papists have invented another way to supply the whole exercise

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of faith herein. They will make crucifixes,—images of Christ crucified, then they will adore, embrace, mourn over, and expect great virtue from them. Without these images they know no way of addressing unto Christ for the communication of any virtue from his death or life. Others may be at the same loss; but they may do well to consider the cause of it: for, is it not from *ignorance of the mystery of the gospel*, and of the communication of supplies of spiritual things from Christ thereby,—of the efficacy of his life and death unto our sanctification and mortification of sin? Or is it not because indeed *they have never been thoroughly distressed in their minds and consciences by the power of sin*, and so have never in good earnest looked for relief? Light, general convictions, either of the guilt or power of sin, will drive none to Christ. When their consciences are reduced unto real straits, and they know not what to do, they will learn better how to "look unto Him whom they have pierced." Their condition, whoever they are, is dangerous, who find not a necessity every day of applying themselves by faith unto Christ for help and succour. Or is it not because they have *other reliefs* to betake themselves unto? Such are their own promises and resolutions; which, for the most part, serve only to cheat and quiet conscience for an hour or a day, and then vanish into nothing. But whatever be the cause of this neglect, those in whom it is will pine away in their sins; for nothing but the death of Christ *for* us will be the death of sin *in* us.

Secondly, Another duty necessary unto this end is *continual prayer*, and this is to be considered as unto its application to the prevalency of any particular lust wherein sin doth in a peculiar manner exert its power. This is the great ordinance of God for its mortification; for,—

[1.] Hereby we obtain spiritual aids and supplies of strength against it. We are not more necessarily and fervently to pray that sin may be *pardoned as to its guilt*, than we are that it may be *subdued as to its power*. He who is negligent in the latter is never in good earnest in the former. The pressures and troubles which we receive from the power of sin are as pungent on the mind as those from its guilt are on the conscience. Mere pardon of sin will never give peace unto a soul, though it can have none without it. It must be mortified also, or we can have no spiritual rest. Now, this is the work of prayer,—namely, to seek and obtain such supplies of mortifying, sanctifying grace, as whereby the power of sin may be broken, its strength abated, its root withered, its life destroyed, and so the whole old man crucified. That which was the apostle's request for the Thessalonians is the daily prayer of all believers for themselves, 1 Thess. v. 23.

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[2.] A constant attendance unto this duty in a due manner will preserve the soul in such a frame as wherein sin cannot habitually prevail in it. He that can live in sin and abide in the ordinary duties of prayer doth never once pray as he ought. Formality, or some secret reserve or other, vitiates the whole. A truly gracious, praying frame (wherein we pray always) is utterly inconsistent with the love of or reserve for any sin. To pray well is to pray always,—that is, to keep the heart always in that frame which is required in prayer; and where this is, sin can have no rule, no, nor quiet harbour, in the soul.

[3.] It is the soul's immediate conflict against the power of sin. Sin in it is formally considered as the soul's enemy, which fights against it. In prayer the soul sets itself to grapple with it, to wound, kill, and destroy. It is that whereby it applies all its spiritual engines unto its utter ruin; herein it exerciseth a gracious abhorrency of it, a clear self-condemnation on the account of it; and engageth faith on all the promises of God for its conquest and destruction.

It is hence evident that if sin hath prevailed in the mind unto a negligence of this duty, either in general or as unto the effectual application of it unto any especial case where it exerts its power, it is an ill symptom of the dominion of sin in the soul.

It is certain that unmortified sin, sin indulged unto, will gradually work out all due regard unto this duty of prayer, and alienate the mind from it, either as unto the matter or manner of its performance. We see this exemplified every day in apostate professors. They have had a gift of prayer, and were constant in the exercise of it; but the love of sin and living in it hath devoured their gift, and wholly taken off their minds from the duty itself: which is the proper character of hypocrites. "Will he delight himself in the Almighty? will he always call upon God?" Job xxvii. 10. He may do so for a season, but, falling under the power of sin, he will not continue so to do.

Now, because sin useth great deceit herein, in a gradual progress for attaining its end, and thereby securing its dominion, we may, in a way of warning or caution, take notice of some of its steps, that the entrance of it may be opposed: for as the "entrance of God's word giveth light," Ps. cxix. 130,—the first putting forth of its power on the soul gives spiritual light unto the mind, which is to be improved,—so the entrance of sin, the first actings of it on the mind, towards the neglect of this duty, brings a deceiving darkness with them, which is to be opposed:—

1*st.* It will produce in the mind *an unreadiness unto this duty in its proper seasons.* The heart should always rejoice in the approach of such seasons, because of the delight in God which it hath in them. To rejoice and be glad in all our approaches unto God is

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every way required of us; and therefore, with the thoughts of and on the approach of such seasons, we ought to groan in ourselves for such a preparedness of mind as may render us meet for that converse with God which we are called unto. But where sin begins to prevail, all things will be unready and out of order. Strange tergiversations will rise in the mind, either as unto the duty itself or as unto the manner of its performance. Customariness and formality are the principles which act themselves in this case. The body seems to carry the mind to the duty whether it will or no, rather than the mind to lead the body in its part of it; and it will employ itself in any thing rather than in the work and duty that lies before it.

Herein, then, lies a great part of our wisdom in obviating the power of sin in us: Let us keep our hearts continually in a gracious disposition and readiness for this duty, in all its proper seasons. If you lose this ground, you will yet go more backwards continually. Know, therefore, that there is no more effectual preservative of the soul from the power of sin than a gracious readiness for and disposition unto this duty in private and public, according to its proper seasons.

2*dly.* In its progress, unto unreadiness it will add *unwillingness;* for the mind prepossessed by sin finds it directly contrary unto its present interest, disposition, and inclination. There is nothing in it but what troubles and disquiets them; as he said of the prophet who was not willing to hear him any more, it speaks not good but evil of them continually. Hence a secret unwillingness prevails in the mind, and an aversation from a serious engagement in it; and the attendance of such persons to it is as if they were under a force, in a compliance with custom and convictions.

3*dly.* Sin will at length prevail unto a *total neglect of this duty.* This is an observation confirmed by long experience: If prayer do not constantly endeavour the ruin of sin, sin will ruin prayer, and utterly alienate the soul from it. This is the way of backsliders in heart; as they grow in sin they decay in prayer, until they are weary of it and utterly relinquish it. So they speak, Mal. i. 13, "Behold, what a weariness is it!" and, "Ye have snuffed at it." They look on it as a task, as a burden, and are weary in attending unto it.

Now, when I place this as an effect of the prevalency of sin,—namely, a relinquishment of the duty of prayer,—I do not intend that persons do wholly and absolutely, or as to all ways of it, public and private, and all seasons or occasions of it, give it over utterly. Few rise to that profligacy in sin, unto such desperate resolution against God. It may be they will still attend unto the stated seasons of prayer in families or public assemblies, at least drawing near to God with

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their lips; and they will, on surprisals and dangers, personally cry unto God, as the Scripture everywhere testifieth of them. But this only I intend,—namely, that they will no more sincerely, immediately, and directly, apply prayer to the mortification and ruin of that lust or corruption wherein sin puts forth its power and rule in them; and where it is so, it seems to have the dominion. Of such an one saith the psalmist, "He hath left off to be wise, and to do good. He setteth himself in a way that is not good; he abhorreth not evil," Ps. xxxvi. 3, 4.

But such a relinquishment of this duty, as unto the end mentioned, as is habitual, and renders the soul secure under it, is intended; for there may, through the power of temptation, be a prevalency of this evil in believers for a season. So God complains of his people, Isa. xliii. 22, "Thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob; but thou hast been weary of me, O Israel;" that is, comparatively, as unto the fervency and sincerity of the duty required of them. Now, when it is thus with believers for a season, through the power of sin and temptation,—(1*st.*) They do not approve of themselves therein. They will ever and anon call things to consideration, and say, "It is not with us as it should be, or as it was in former days. This thing is not good that we do, nor will it be peace in the latter end." (2*dly.*) They will have secret resolutions of shaking themselves out of the dust of this evil state. They say in themselves, "We will go and return unto our first husband, for then was it better with us than now;" as the church did, Hosea ii. 7. (3*dly.*) Every thing that peculiarly befalls them, in a way of mercy or affliction, they look on as calls from God to deliver and recover them from their backsliding frame. (4*thly.*) They will receive in the warnings which are given them by the word preached, especially if their particular case be touched on or laid open. (5*thly.*) They will have no quiet, rest, or self-approbation, until they come thoroughly off unto a healing and recovery, such as that described, Hosea xiv. 1–4.

Thus it may be with some over whom sin hath not the dominion; yet ought the first entrance of it to be diligently watched against, as that which tends unto the danger and ruin of the soul.

Thirdly, Constant self-abasement, condemnation, and abhorrency, is another duty that is directly opposed unto the interest and rule of sin in the soul. No frame of mind is a better antidote against the poison of sin. "He that walketh humbly walketh surely."[1] God hath a continual regard unto mourners, those that are of a "broken heart and a contrite spirit." It is the soil where all grace will thrive and flourish. A constant due sense of sin as sin, of our interest therein by nature and in the course of our lives, with a continual afflictive

[1] Prov. x. 9. The English version has it, "He that walketh uprightly."—Ed.

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remembrance of some such instances of it as have had peculiar aggravations, issuing in a gracious self-abasement, is the soul's best posture in watching against all the deceits and incursions of sin. And this is a duty which we ought with all diligence to attend unto. To keep our souls in a constant frame of mourning and self-abasement is the most necessary part of our wisdom with reference unto all the ends of the life of God; and it is so far from having any inconsistency with those consolations and joys which the gospel tenders unto us in believing, as that it is the only way to let them into the soul in a due manner. It is such mourners, and those alone, unto whom evangelical comforts are administered, Isa. lvii. 18.

One of the first things that sin doth when it aims at dominion is the destruction of this frame of mind; and when it actually hath the rule, it will not suffer it to enter. It makes men careless and regardless of this matter, yea, bold, presumptuous, and fearless; it will obstruct all the entrance into the mind of such self-reflections and considerations as lead unto this frame; it will represent them either as needless or unseasonable, or make the mind afraid of them, as things which tend unto its disquietment and disturbance without any advantage. If it prevail herein, it makes way for the security of its own dominion. Nothing is more watched against than a proud, regardless, senseless, secure frame of heart, by them who are under the rule of grace.

4. A reserve for any one known sin, against the light and efficacy of convictions, is an argument of the dominion of sin. So was it in the case of Naaman. He would do all other things, but put in an exception for that whereon his honour and profit did depend. *Where there is sincerity in conviction, it extends itself unto all sins;* for it is of sin as sin, and so of every known sin equally, that hath the nature of sin in it. And to be true to convictions is the life of sincerity. If men can make a choice of what they will except and reserve, notwithstanding their being convinced of its evil, it is from the ruling power of sin. Pleas in the mind in the behalf of any sin, that is, for a continuance in it, prevalent thereunto, ruin all sincerity. It may be the pretence is that it is but a little one, of no great moment, and that which shall be compensated with other duties of obedience; or it shall be retained only until a fitter season for its relinquishment; or men may be blinded after conviction to dispute again whether what they would abide in be sinful or no, as is the case frequently with respect unto covetousness, pride, and conformity to the world. It is a dreadful effect of the ruling power of sin. Whatever impeacheth the universality of obedience in one thing overthrows its sincerity in all things.

5. Hardness of heart, so frequently mentioned and complained of

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in the Scripture, is another evidence of the dominion of sin. But because there are various degrees also hereof, they must be considered, that we may judge aright what of it is an evidence of that dominion, and what may be consistent with the rule of grace; for it is that mysterious evil whereof the best men do most complain, and whereof the worst have no sense at all.

CHAPTER IV.

Hardness of heart spoken to as an eminent sign of sin's dominion; and it is shown that it ought to be considered as total or partial.

HARDNESS of heart is either *total* and absolute, or *partial* and comparative only.

Total hardness is either natural and universal, or judiciary in some particular individuals.

Natural hardness is the blindness or obstinacy of the heart in sin by nature, which is not to be cured by the use or application of any outward means: "Hardness and impenitent heart," Rom. ii. 5. This is that heart of stone which God promises in the covenant to take away by the efficacy of his almighty grace, Ezek. xxxvi. 26. Where this hardness abides uncured, unremoved, there sin is absolutely in the throne. This, therefore, we do not inquire about.

Judiciary hardness is either immediately from God, or it is by the devil through his permission.

In the first way, God is frequently said to harden the hearts of men in their sins and unto their ruin; as he did with Pharaoh, Exod. iv. 21. And he doth it in general two ways:—1. By withholding from them those supplies of light, wisdom, and understanding, without which they cannot understand their condition, see their danger, or avoid their ruin. 2. By withholding the efficacy of the means which they enjoy for their conviction and repentance, yea, and giving them an efficacy unto their obduration, Isa. vi. 9, 10. And concerning this divine induration we may observe,—

1. That it is the severest of divine punishments in this world. 2. That therefore it is not executed but towards those that are habitually wicked, and so do of choice harden themselves in their sins, Rom. i. 26, 28. 3. For the most part it respects some especial times and seasons, wherein are the turning-points for eternity. 4. That the condition of those so hardened is remediless, and their wounds incurable.

Where any are thus hardened, there is no question about the

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dominion of sin. Such a heart is its throne, its proper seat, next to hell.

Secondly, There is a judiciary hardness which Satan, through God's permission, brings on men, 2 Cor. iv. 4; and there are many ways whereby he doth effect it, not here to be insisted on.

But there is a hardness of heart that is indeed but partial and comparative, whatever appearance it may make of that which is total and absolute; whence the inquiry ariseth whether it be an evidence of the dominion of sin or no.

There is a hardness of heart which is known and lamented by them in whom it is. Hereof the church complains, Isa. lxiii. 17, "O LORD, why hast thou hardened our heart from thy fear?" or, "suffered it so to be, not healing, not recovering our hardness." And there are sundry things which concur in this kind of hardness of heart; as,—

1. *Want of readiness to receive divine impressions from the word of God.* When the heart is soft and tender, it is also humble and contrite, and ready to tremble at the word of God. So it is said of Josiah that "his heart was tender," and "he humbled himself before the LORD," when he heard his word, 2 Kings xxii. 18, 19. This may be wanting in some in a great measure, and they may be sensible of it. They may find in themselves a great unreadiness to comply with divine warnings, reproofs, calls. They are not affected with the word preached, but sometimes complain that they sit under it like stocks and stones. They have not an experience of its power, and are not cast into the mould of it. Hereon they apprehend that their hearts are hardened from the fear of God, as the church complains. There is, indeed, no better frame of heart to be attained in this life than that whereby it is to the word as the wax to the seal, fit and ready to receive impressions from it,—a frame that is tender to receive the communications of the word in all their variety, whether for reproof, instruction, or consolation; and the want hereof is a culpable hardness of heart.

2. There belongs unto it an [*un*]*affectedness with the guilt of sin*, as unto the sorrow and repentance that it doth require. There is none in whom there is any spark of saving grace but hath a gracious sorrow for sin, in some degree or other. But there is a proportion required between sin and sorrow. Great sins require great sorrows, as Peter, on his great sin, "wept bitterly;" and all especial aggravations of sin require an especial sense of them. This the soul finds not in itself. It bears the thoughts of sin and the rebukes of conscience without any great concussion or remorse; it can pass over the charge of sin without relenting, mourning, dissolving in sighs and tears; and it cannot but say sometimes thereon that its heart is

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like the adamant or the flint in the rock. This makes many fear that they are under the dominion of sin; and they fear it the more because that fear doth not affect and humble them as it ought. And it must be granted that all unaffectedness with sin, all want of humiliation and godly sorrow upon it, is from an undue hardness of heart; and they who are not affected with it have great reason to be jealous over themselves, even as unto their spiritual state and condition.

3. Of the same kind, in its measure, is *unaffectedness with the sins of others* among whom we live, or in whom we are concerned. To mourn for the sins of others is a duty highly approved of God, Ezek. ix. 4. It argues the effectual working of many graces, as zeal for the glory of God, compassion for the souls of men, love to the glory and interest of Christ in the world. The want hereof is from hardness of heart; and it is that which abounds among us. Some find not themselves at all concerned herein; some make pretences why they need not so be, or that it is not their duty,—what is it unto them how wicked the world is? it shall answer for its own sins. Nor are they moved when it comes nearer them. If their children come to losses, poverty, ruin, then they are affected indeed; but so long as they flourish in the world, be they apostates from profession, be they enemies to Christ, do they avowedly belong unto the world and walk in the ways of it, they are not much concerned, especially if they are not scandalously profligate. But this also is from hardness of heart, which will be bewailed where grace is vigilant and active.

4. *Want of a due sense of indications of divine displeasure* is another instance of this hardness of heart. God doth ofttimes give signs and tokens hereof, whether as unto the public state of the church in the world, or as unto our own persons, in afflictions and chastisements. In the seasons hereof he expects that our hearts should be soft and tender, ready to receive impressions of his anger, and pliable therein unto his mind and will. There are none whom at such a time he doth more abhor than those who are stout-hearted, little regarding him or the operation of his hands. This in some measure may be in believers, and they may be sensible of it, to their sorrow and humiliation.

These things, and many more of the like nature, proceed from hardness of heart, or the remainder of our hardness by nature, and are great promoters of the interest of sin in us. But where any persons are sensible of this frame, where they are humbled for it, where they mourn under, and cry out for its removal, it is so far from being an evidence of the dominion of sin over them in whom it is, that it is an eminent sign of the contrary,—namely, that the ruling power of sin is certainly broken and destroyed in the soul.

But there are other instances of hardness of heart, which have

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much more difficulty in them, and which are hardly reconcilable unto the rule of grace. I shall mention some of them:—

1. *Security and senselessness under the guilt of great actual sins.* I do not say this is, or can at any time be, absolute in any believer; but such it may be as whereon men may go on at their old pace of duties and profession, though without any peculiar humiliation, albeit they are under the provoking guilt of some known sin, with its aggravations. It will recur upon their minds, and conscience, unless it be seared, will treat with them about it; but they pass it over, as that which they had rather forget and wear out of their minds than bring things unto their proper issue by particular repentance. So it seems to have been with David after his sin with Bathsheba. I doubt not but that before the message of God to him by Nathan, he had unpleasing thoughts of what he had done; but there are not the least footsteps in the story or any of his prayers that he laid it seriously to heart and was humbled for it before. This was a great hardness of heart; and we know how difficult his recovery from it was. He was saved, but as through fire. And where it is so with any one that hath been overtaken with any great sin, as drunkenness or other folly, that he strives to wear it out, to pass it over, to forget it, or give himself countenance from any reasoning or consideration against the especial sense of it and humiliation for it, he can, during that state and frame, have no solid evidence that sin hath not the dominion in him. And let such sinners be warned who have so passed over former sins until they have utterly lost all sense of them, or are under such a frame at present, that they recall things to another account, and suffer no such sin to pass without a peculiar humiliation, or, whatever be the final issue of things with them, they can have no solid ground of spiritual peace in this world.

2. There is such a dangerous hardness of heart, *where the guilt of one sin makes not the soul watchful against another of another sort.* Wherever the heart is tender, upon a surprisal into sin, it will not only watch against the returns thereof or relapses into it, but will be made diligent, heedful, and careful against all other sins whatever. So is it with all that walk humbly under a sense of sin. But when men [are] in such a state [they] are careless, bold, and negligent, so as that if they repeat not the same sin, they are easily hurried into others. Thus was it with Asa. He was "wroth with the seer" that came unto him with a divine message, and smote him, "and put him in a prison house, for he was in a rage," 2 Chron. xvi. 10. A man would think that when he was recovered out of this distemper, it might have made him humble and watchful against other sins; but it was not so, for it is added that he "oppressed some of the people at

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the same time." And he rested not there, but "in his disease he sought not to the LORD, but to the physicians," verse 12. Unto persecution he added oppression, and unto that unbelief. Yet, notwithstanding all this, "Asa's heart was perfect with the LORD all his days," 1 Kings xv. 14; that is, he had a prevalent sincerity in him notwithstanding these miscarriages. But he was, doubtless, under the power of great hardness of heart. So is it with others in the like cases, when one sin makes them not careful and watchful against another; as when men have stained themselves with intemperance of life, they may fall into excess of passion with their families and relations, or into a neglect of duty, or take any other crooked steps in their walk. This argues a great prevalency of sin in the soul, although, as we see in the example of Asa, it is not an infallible evidence of its dominion; yet of that nature it is wherewith divine peace and consolation are inconsistent.

3. When men fall into such unspiritual frames, such deadness and decays, *as from which they are not recoverable by the ordinary means of grace*, it is a certain evidence of hardness of heart and the prevalency of sin therein. It is so, whether this be the fault of churches or of particular persons. The preaching of the word is the especial divine ordinance for the healing and recovery of backsliders in heart or life. Where this will not effect it in any, but they will go on frowardly in the ways of their own hearts, unless God take some extraordinary course with them, they are on the brink of ruin, and live on sovereign grace alone.

Thus was it with David. After his great sin, there is no doubt but he attended unto all ordinances of divine worship, which are the ordinary means of the preservation and recovery of sinners from their backslidings. Howbeit they had not this effect upon him. He lived impenitently in his sin, until God was pleased to use extraordinary means, in the especial message of Nathan and the death of his child, for his awakening and recovery.

And thus God will deal sometimes with churches and persons. Where ordinary means for their recovery will not effect it, he will by sovereign grace, and it may be by a concurrence of extraordinary providences, heal, revive, and save them. So he promiseth to do, Isa. lvii. 16–19.

But where this is trusted unto, in the neglect of the ordinary means of healing, seeing there is no direct promise of it, but it is a case reserved unto absolute sovereignty, the end may be bitterness and sorrow.

And let them take heed who are under this frame; for although God may deliver them, yet it will be by "terrible things," as Ps. lxv. 5,—such terrible things as wherein he will "take vengeance of

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their inventions," Ps. xcix. 8, though he do forgive them. So David affirms of himself, that God in his dealing with him had broken all his bones, Ps. li. 8.

I fear this is the present case of many churches and professors at this day. It is evident that they are fallen under many spiritual decays; neither have the ordinary means of grace, repentance, and humiliation, though backed with various providential warnings, been efficacious to their recovery. It is greatly to be feared that God will use some severe dispensation in terrible things towards them for their awakening, or, which is more dreadful, withdraw his presence from them.

4. Of the same nature it is, and argues no small power of this evil, *when men satisfy and please themselves in an unmortified, unfruitful profession;* a severe symptom of the dominion of sin. And there are three things that manifest the consistency of such a profession with hardness of heart, or are fruits of it therein:—

(1.) *A neglect of the principal duties of it.* Such are mortification in themselves, and usefulness or fruitfulness towards others. A deficiency and neglect in these things are evident amongst many that profess religion. It doth not appear that in any thing they seriously endeavour the mortification of their lusts, their pride, their passion, their love of the world, their inordinate desires and sensual appetites. They either indulge unto them all, or at least they maintain not a constant conflict against them. And as unto usefulness in the fruits of righteousness, which are to the praise of God by Jesus Christ, or those good works which are the evidence of a living faith, they are openly barren in them. Now, whereas these are the principal dictates of that religion which they do profess, their neglect of them, their deficiency in them, proceed from a hardness of heart, overpowering their light and convictions. And what shall long, in such a case, stop sin out of the throne? Self-pleasing and satisfaction in such a profession argues a very dangerous state and habit of mind. Sin may have a full dominion under such a profession.

(2.) The admission of *an habitual formality into the performance of religious duties* is of the same nature. In some the power of sin, as we observed before, prevails unto the neglect and omission of such duties. Others continue the observation [of them], but are so formal and lifeless in them, so careless as unto the exerting or exercise of grace in them, as gives an uncontrollable evidence of the power of sin and a spiritual senselessness of heart. There is nothing that the Scripture doth more frequently and severely condemn, and give as a character of hypocrites, than a diligent attendance unto a multiplication of duties whilst the heart is not spiritually engaged in them. For this cause the Lord Christ threatened the utter rejection of the lukewarm

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church of Laodicea; and God pronounceth a most severe sentence against all that are guilty of it, Isa. xxix. 13, 14. Yet thus it may be with many, and that thus it hath been with them many do manifest by their open apostasy, which is the common event of this frame and course long continued in; for some in the daily performance of religious duties for a season do exercise and preserve their gifts, but, there being no exercise of grace in them, after a while those gifts also do wither and decay. They are under the power of the evil whereof we treat,—namely, a hard and senseless heart,—that can approve of themselves in such a lifeless, heartless profession of religion, and performance of the duties thereof.

(3.) When men grow *senseless under the dispensation of the word*, and do not at all profit by it. The general ends of preaching the word unto believers are:—[1.] The increase of spiritual light, knowledge, and understanding, in them; [2.] The growth of grace, enabling to obedience; [3.] Holy excitation of grace, by impressions of its power in the communication of the mind, will, love, and grace of God, unto our souls;—which is attended with, [4.] An impression on the affections, renewing and making them more holy and heavenly continually; with, [5.] Direction and administration of spiritual strength against temptations and corruptions; and, [6.] Fruitfulness in the works and duties of obedience.

Where men can abide under the dispensation of the word without any of these effects on their minds, consciences, or lives, they are greatly hardened by the deceitfulness of sin, as in Heb. iii. 12, 13, this case is stated. Now, whether this be,—[1.] From that carelessness and security which is grown on all sorts of persons, against which God doth justly express his indignation, by withholding the power and efficacy of his word in its administration from them; or, [2.] From an increase of an unsanctified light and gifts, which fill men with high thoughts of themselves, and keep them off from that humble frame which alone is teachable; or, [3.] From a loss of all due reverence unto the ministry as God's ordinance for all the ends of the word, with a secret fortification of conscience by prejudices against its power, from the suggestions of Satan; or, [4.] From the love of sin, which the heart would shelter and secure from the efficacy of the word; or from what other cause soever it be,—it proceeds from a dangerous hardness of heart, from the power of sin.

Where this is the state of the minds of men, where this hardness is thus prevalent in them, I do not, no man can, give them assurance that sin hath not the dominion in them; but because all these things are capable of various degrees, it may not be concluded absolutely from any or all of them, in any degree, that so it is. But this we may safely conclude,—1. That it is impossible for any man in whom

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this evil frame is found in any degree, and not sincerely endeavoured against, to keep any true solid peace with God or in his own soul; what seems to be so in him is but a ruinous security. 2. That this is the high road unto final obduration and impenitency. And therefore, 3. It is the present duty of those who have any care of their souls to shake themselves out of this dust, and not to give themselves any rest until they are entered into the paths of recovery. The calls of God unto such backsliders in heart for a return are multiplied; the reasons for it and motives unto it are innumerable. This ought never to depart from their minds, that without it they shall eternally perish, and they know not how soon they may be overtaken with that destruction.

Thus far have we proceeded in the inquiry, whether sin hath the dominion in us or no. There are on the other side many evidences of the rule of grace, sufficient to discard the pleas and pretences of sin unto the throne; but the consideration of them is not my present design. I have only examined the pleas of sin which render the inquiry difficult and the case dubious; and they arise all from the actings of sin in us as it fights against the soul, which is its proper and constant work, 1 Pet. ii. 11. It doth so against the design of the law, which is to live to God; against the order and peace of it, which it disturbs; and against its eternal blessedness, which it would deprive it of. The examination of the pretences insisted on may be of some use to them that are sincere.

But, on the other hand, there are uncontrollable evidences of the dominion of sin in men, some whereof I shall mention, and only mention, because they need neither proof nor illustration:—

1. It is so where sin hath possessed the will. And it hath possessed the will when there are no restraints from sinning taken from its nature, but from its consequents only. 2. When men proclaim their sins and hide them not,—when they boast in them and of them, as it is with multitudes; or, 3. Approve of themselves in any known sin, without renewed repentance, as drunkenness, uncleanness, swearing, and the like; or, 4. Live in the neglect of religious duties in their closets and families, whence all their public attendance unto them is but hypocrisy; or, 5. Have an enmity to true holiness and the power of godliness; or, 6. Are visible apostates from profession, especially if they add, as is usual, persecution to their apostasy; or, 7. Are ignorant of the sanctifying principles of the gospel and Christian religion; or, 8. Are despisers of the means of conversion; or, 9. Live in security under open providential warnings and calls to repentance; or, 10. Are enemies in their minds unto the true interest of Christ in the world. Where these things and the like are found, there is no question what it is that hath

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dominion and bears rule in the minds of men. This all men may easily know, as the apostle declares, Rom. vi. 16.

CHAPTER V.

The third inquiry handled, namely, What is the assurance given us, and what are the grounds thereof, that sin shall not have dominion over us—The ground of this assurance is, that we are "not under the law, but under grace"—The force of this reason shown, namely, How the law doth not destroy the dominion of sin, and how grace dethrones sin and gives dominion over it.

III. AND thus much hath been spoken unto the second thing proposed at the entrance of this discourse,—namely, an inquiry, *Whether sin have the dominion in any of us or no.* I proceed unto that which offers itself from the words, in the third place: *What is the assurance given us, and what are the grounds of it, that sin shall not have dominion over us; which lies in this, that we are "not under the law, but under grace."*

Where men are engaged in a constant conflict against sin; where they look upon it and judge it their chiefest enemy, which contends with them for their souls and their eternal ruin; where they have experience of its power and deceit, and through the efficacy of them have been often shaken in their peace and comfort; where they have been ready to despond, and say they shall one day perish under their powers,—it is a gospel word, a word of good tidings, that gives them assurance that it shall never have dominion over them.

The ground of this assurance is, that believers are "not under the law, but under grace." And the force of this reason we may manifest in some few instances:—

FIRST, The law *giveth no strength against sin* unto them that are under it, but grace doth. Sin will neither be cast nor kept out of its throne, but by a spiritual power and strength in the soul to oppose, conquer, and dethrone it. Where it is not conquered it will reign; and conquered it will not be without a mighty prevailing power: this the law will not, cannot give.

The law is taken two ways:—1. For the whole revelation of the mind and will of God in the Old Testament. In this sense it had grace in it, and so did give both life, and light, and strength against sin, as the psalmist declares, Ps. xix. 7–9. In this sense it contained not only the law of precepts, but the promise also and the covenant, which was the means of conveying spiritual life and strength unto the church. In this sense it is not here spoken of, nor is anywhere opposed unto grace. 2. For the covenant rule of perfect obedience:

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"Do this, and live." In this sense men are said to be "under it," in opposition unto being "under grace." They are under its power, rule, conditions, and authority, as a covenant. And in this sense all men are under it who are not instated in the new covenant through faith in Christ Jesus, who sets up in them and over them the rule of grace; for all men must be one way or other under the rule of God, and he rules only by the law or by grace, and none can be under both at the same time.

In this sense the law was never ordained of God to convey grace or spiritual strength unto the souls of men; had it been so, the promise and the gospel had been needless: "If there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law," Gal. iii. 21. If it could have given life or strength, it would have produced righteousness, we should have been justified by it. It discovers sin and condemns it, but gives no strength to oppose it. It is not God's ordinance for the dethroning of sin, nor for the destruction of its dominion.

This law falls under a double consideration, but in neither of them was designed to give power or strength against sin:—

1. *As it was given unto mankind in the state of innocency;* and it did then absolutely and exactly declare the whole duty of man, whatever God in his wisdom and holiness did require of us. It was God's ruling of man according to the principle of the righteousness wherein he was created. But it gave no new aids against sin; nor was there any need that so it should do. It was not the ordinance of God to administer new or more grace unto man, but to rule and govern him according to what he had received; and this it continueth to do for ever. It claims and continues a rule over all men, according to what they had and what they have; but it never had power to bar the entrance of sin, nor to cast it out when it is once enthroned.

2. *As it was renewed and enjoined unto the church of Israel on Mount Sinai,* and with them unto all that would join themselves unto the Lord out of the nations of the world. Yet neither was it then, nor as such, designed unto any such end as to destroy or dethrone sin by an administration of spiritual strength and grace. It had some new ends given then unto it, which it had not in its original constitution, the principal whereof was to drive men to the promise, and Christ therein; and this it doth by all the acts and powers of it on the souls of men. As it discovers sin, as it irritates and provokes it by its severity, as it judgeth and condemneth it, as it denounceth a curse on sinners, it drives unto this end; for this was added of grace in the renovation of it, this new end was given unto it. In itself it hath nothing to do with sinners, but to judge, curse, and condemn them.

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There is, therefore, no help to be expected against the dominion of sin from the law. It was never ordained of God unto that end; nor doth it contain, nor is it communicative of, the grace necessary unto that end, Rom. viii. 3.

Wherefore, those who are "under the law" are under the dominion of sin. "The law is holy," but it cannot make them holy who have made themselves unholy; it is "just," but it cannot make them so,—it cannot justify them whom it doth condemn; it is "good," but can do them no good, as unto their deliverance from the power of sin. God hath not appointed it unto that end. Sin will never be dethroned by it; it will not give place unto the law, neither in its title nor its power.

Those who are under the law will at some seasons endeavour to shake off the yoke of sin, and resolve to be no longer under its power; as,—

1. When the law presseth on their consciences, perplexing and disquieting them. The commandment comes home unto them, sin reviveth, and they die, Rom. vii. 9, 10; that is, it gives power to sin to slay the hopes of the sinner, and to distress him with the apprehension of guilt and death: for "the strength of sin is the law," 1 Cor. xv. 56;—the power it hath to disquiet and condemn sinners is in and by the law. When it is thus with sinners, when the law presseth them with a sense of the guilt of sin, and deprives them of all rest and peace in their minds, they will resolve to cast off the yoke of sin, to relinquish its service, that they may be freed from the urgency of the law on their consciences; and they will endeavour it in some instances of duty and abstinence from sin.

2. They will do the same under surprisals with sickness, pain, dangers, or death itself. Then they will cry, and pray, and promise to reform, and set about it, as they suppose, in good earnest. This case is fully exemplified, Ps. lxxviii. 34–37; and it is manifest in daily experience amongst multitudes. There are few who are so seared and profligate but at such seasons they will think of returning to God, of relinquishing the service of sin, and vindicating themselves from under its dominion. And in some it worketh a lasting change, though no real conversion doth ensue; but with the most this "goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away."

3. The same effect is produced in many by the preaching of the word. Some arrow of conviction is fastened in their minds, whereon their former ways displease them, and they judge it is better for them to change the course of their lives, and to relinquish the service of sin. These resolutions for the most part abide with them according to the society which they have or fall into. Good society

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may much help them in their resolves for a time, when by that which is evil and corrupt they are presently extinguished.

4. Sometimes merciful, endearing providences will have the same effect on the minds of men not obdurate in sin. Such are deliverances from imminent dangers, sparing the lives of near relations, and the like.

In such seasons, men under the law will attend unto their convictions, and endeavour for a while to shake off the yoke of sin. They will attend unto what the law saith, under whose power they are, and endeavour a compliance therewith; many duties shall be performed, and many evils abstained from, in order to the quitting themselves of sin's dominion. But, alas! the law cannot enable them hereunto,—it cannot give them life and strength to go through with what their convictions press them unto; therefore, after a while they begin to faint and wax weary in their progress, and at length give quite over. It may be they may break off from some great sins in particular, but shake off the whole dominion of sin they cannot.

It is otherwise with them that are "under grace." Sin shall not have dominion over them; strength shall be administered unto them to dethrone it.

"Grace" is a word of various acceptations in the Scripture. As we are here said to be under it, and as it is opposed unto the law, it is used or taken for the gospel, as it is the instrument of God for the communication of himself and his grace by Jesus Christ unto those that do believe, with that state of acceptation with himself which they are brought into thereby, Rom. v. 1, 2. Wherefore, to be "under grace" is to have an interest in the gospel covenant and state, with a right unto all the privileges and benefits thereof, to be brought under the administration of grace by Jesus Christ,—to be a true believer.

But the inquiry hereon is, how it follows from hence that sin shall not have dominion over us, that sin cannot extend its territories and rule into that state, and in what sense this is affirmed.

1. Is it that there shall be no sin in them any more? Even this is true in some sense. Sin as unto its condemning power hath no place in this state, Rom. viii. 1. All the sins of them that believe are expiated or done away, as to the guilt of them, in the blood of Christ, Heb. i. 3; 1 John i. 7. This branch of the dominion of sin, which consists in its condemning power, is utterly cast out of this state. But sin as unto its being and operation doth still continue in believers whilst they are in this world; they are all sensible of it. Those who deceive themselves with a contrary apprehension are most of all under the power of it, 1 John i. 8. Wherefore, to be freed from the dominion of sin is not to be freed absolutely from all

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sin, so as that it should in no sense abide in us any more. This is not to be under grace, but to be in glory.

2. Is it that sin, though it abides, yet it shall not fight or contend for dominion in us? That this is otherwise we have before declared. Scripture and the universal experience of all that believe do testify the contrary; so doth the assurance here given us that it shall not obtain that dominion: for if it did not contend for it, there could be no grace in this promise,—there is none in deliverance from that whereof we are in no danger.

But the assurance here given is built on other considerations; whereof the first is, that the gospel is the means ordained and instrument used by God for the communication of spiritual strength unto them that believe, for the dethroning of sin. It is the "power of God unto salvation," Rom. i. 16, that whereby and wherein he puts forth his power unto that end. And sin must be really dethroned by the powerful acting of grace in us, and that in a way of duty in ourselves. We are absolved, quitted, freed from the rule of sin, as unto its pretended right and title, by the promise of the gospel; for thereby are we freed and discharged from the rule of the law, wherein all the title of sin unto dominion is founded, for "the strength of sin is the law:" but we are freed from it, as unto its internal power and exercise of its dominion, by internal spiritual grace and strength in its due exercise. Now, this is communicated by the gospel; it gives life and power, with such continual supplies of grace as are able to dethrone sin, and for ever to prohibit its return.

This, then, is the present case supposed and determined by the apostle: "You that are believers are all of you conflicting with sin. You find it always restless and disquieting, sometimes strong and powerful. When it is in conjunction with any urgent temptation, you are afraid it will utterly prevail over you, to the ruin of your souls. Hence you are wearied with it, groan under it, and cry out for deliverance from it." All these things the apostle at large insists on in this and the next chapter. "But now," saith he, "be of good comfort; notwithstanding all these things, and all your fears upon them, sin shall not prevail, it shall not have the dominion, it shall never ruin your souls." But what ground have we for this hope? what assurance of this success? "This you have," saith the apostle, "'Ye are not under the law, but under grace;' or the rule of the grace of God in Christ Jesus, administered in the gospel." But how doth this give relief? "Why, it is the ordinance, the instrument of God, which he will use unto this end,—namely, the communication of such supplies of grace and spiritual strength as shall eternally defeat the dominion of sin."

This is one principal difference between the law and the gospel,

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and was ever so esteemed in the church of God, until all communication of efficacious grace began to be called in question: The law guides, directs, commands, all things that are against the interest and rule of sin. It judgeth and condemneth both the things that promote it and the persons that do them; it frightens and terrifies the consciences of those who are under its dominion. But if you shall say unto it, "What then shall we do? this tyrant, this enemy, is too hard for us. What aid and assistance against it will you afford unto us? what power will you communicate unto its destruction?" Here the law is utterly silent, or says that nothing of this nature is committed unto it of God; nay, the strength it hath it gives unto sin for the condemnation of the sinner: "The strength of sin is the law." But the gospel, or the grace of it, is the means and instrument of God for the communication of internal spiritual strength unto believers. By it do they receive supplies of the Spirit or aids of grace for the subduing of sin and the destruction of its dominion. By it they may say they can do all things, through Him that enables them.

Hereon then depends, in the first place, the assurance of the apostle's assertion, that "sin shall not have dominion over us," because we are "under grace." We are in such a state as wherein we have supplies in readiness to defeat all the attempts of sin for rule and dominion in us.

But some may say hereon, they greatly fear they are not in this state, for they do not find such supplies of spiritual strength and grace as to give them a conquest over sin. They are still perplexed with it, and it is ready to invade the throne in their minds, if it be not already possessed of it. Wherefore they fear lest they are strangers from the grace of the gospel.

In answer hereunto the things ensuing are proposed:—

1. *Remember what hath been declared concerning the dominion of sin.* If it be not known what it is and wherein it doth consist, as some may please themselves whilst their condition is deplorable (as it is with the most), so others may be perplexed in their minds without just cause. A clear distinction between the *rebellion* of sin and the *dominion* of sin is a great advantage unto spiritual peace.

2. *Consider the end for which aids of grace are granted and communicated by the gospel.* Now, this is not that sin may at once be utterly destroyed and consumed in us, that it should have no being, motion, or power in us any more. This work is reserved for glory, in the full redemption of body and soul, which we here do but groan after. But it is given unto us for this end, that sin may be so crucified and mortified in us,—that is, so gradually weakened and destroyed,—as that it shall not ruin spiritual life in us, or obstruct its necessary acting in duties, and for prevalency against such sins as would

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disannul the covenant relation between God and our souls. Whilst we have supplies of it which are sufficient unto this end, although our conflict with sin doth continue, although we are perplexed by it, yet we are under grace, and sin shall have no more dominion over us. This is enough for us, that sin shall be gradually destroyed, and we shall have a sufficiency of grace on all occasions to prevent its ruling prevalency.

3. *Live in the faith of this sacred truth, and ever keep alive in your souls expectation of supplies of grace suitable thereunto.* It is of the nature of true and saving faith, inseparable from it, to believe that the gospel is the way of God's administration of grace for the ruin of sin. He that believes it not believes not the gospel itself, which is "the power of God unto salvation," Rom. i. 16. If we live, and walk, and act, as if we had nothing to trust unto but ourselves, our own endeavours, our own resolutions, and that in our perplexities and surprisals, it is no wonder if we are not sensible of supplies of divine grace;—most probably we are under the law, and not under grace. This is the fundamental principle of the gospel state, that we live in expectation of continual communications of life, grace, and strength, from Jesus Christ, who is "our life," and from whose "fulness we receive, and grace for grace." We may therefore, in this case, continually expostulate with our souls, as David doth: "Why go you mourning because of the oppression of the enemy? Why are you cast down? and why are you disquieted within us? Still hope in God; he is the health of my countenance." We may be sensible of great oppression from the power of this enemy; this may cause us to go mourning all the day long, and in some sense it ought so to do. Howbeit we ought not hence to despond, or to be cast down from our duty or our comfort. Still we may trust in God through Christ, and live in continual expectation of such spiritual reliefs as shall assuredly preserve us from the dominion of sin. This faith, hope, and expectation, we are called unto by the gospel; and when they are not cherished, when they are not kept up unto a due exercise, all things will go backward in our spiritual condition.

4. *Make especial application unto the Lord Christ,* unto whom the administration of all spiritual supplies is committed, for the communication of them unto you, according unto all especial occasions. Hath sin got the advantage of a powerful temptation, so as that it seems to put hard for dominion in the soul; as it was with Paul under the buffetings of Satan, when he had that answer from the Lord, upon his reiterated prayer, "My grace is sufficient for thee;"—"Sin shall not have dominion over thee"? Hath it, by its deceitfulness, brought the soul into a lifeless, senseless frame, made it forgetful of duties, negligent in them, or without spiritual delight in their performance?

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Hath it almost habituated the soul unto careless and corrupt inclinations, unto the love of, or conformity to, the world? Doth it take advantage from our darkness and confusion, under troubles, distresses, or temptations? On these and the like occasions it is required that we make especial fervent application unto the Lord Christ for such supplies of grace as may be sufficient and efficacious to control the power of sin in them all. This, under the consideration of his office and authority unto this end, his grace and readiness from special inducements, we are directed unto, Heb. iv. 14–16.

5. *Remember always the way and method of the operation of divine grace and spiritual aids.* It is true, in our first conversion to God, we are as it were surprised by a mighty act of sovereign grace, changing our hearts, renewing our minds, and quickening us with a principle of spiritual life. Ordinarily, many things are required of us in a way of duty in order thereunto; and many previous operations of grace in our minds, in illumination and the sense of sin, do materially and passively dispose us thereunto, as wood when it is dried is disposed to firing: but the work itself is performed by an immediate act of divine power, without any active co-operation on our part. But this is not the law or rule of the communication or operation of actual grace for the subduing of sin. It is given in a way of concurrence with us in the discharge of our duties; and when we are sedulous in them, we may be sure we shall not fail of divine assistance, according to the established rule of the administration of gospel grace. If, therefore, we complain that we find not the aids mentioned, and if at the same time we are not diligent in attendance unto all the duties whereby sin may be mortified in us, we are exceedingly injurious to the grace of God.

Wherefore, notwithstanding this objection, the truth stands firm, that "sin shall not have dominion over us, for we are not under the law, but under grace;" because of the spiritual aids that are administered by grace for its mortification and destruction.

SECONDLY, The law *gives no liberty of any kind;* it gendereth unto bondage, and so cannot free us from any dominion,—not that of sin, for this must be by liberty. But this we have also by the gospel. There is a twofold liberty:—1. Of state and condition; 2. Of internal operation; and we have both by the gospel.

The *first consists in our deliverance from the law and its curse,* with all things which claim a right against us by virtue thereof; that is, Satan, death, and hell. Out of this state, from whence we can never be delivered by the law, we are translated by grace into a state of glorious liberty; for by it the Son makes us free. And we receive the Spirit of Christ; now, "where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty," 2 Cor. iii. 17. This liberty Christ proclaims in the gospel

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unto all that do believe, Isa. lxi. 1. Hereon they who hear and receive the joyful sound are discharged from all debts, bonds, accounts, rights, and titles, and are brought into a state of perfect freedom. In this state sin can lay no claim to dominion over any one soul. They are gone over into the kingdom of Christ, and out from the power of sin, Satan, and darkness. Herein, indeed, lies the foundation of our assured freedom from the rule of sin. It cannot make an incursion on the kingdom of Christ, so as to carry away any of its subjects into a state of sin and darkness again. And an interest in this state ought to be pleaded against all the attempts of sin, Rom. vi. 1, 2. There is nothing more to be detested than that any one who is Christ's freeman, and dead to the power of sin, should give place again unto any of its pretences to or endeavours for rule.

Again, there is an *internal liberty*, which is the freedom of the mind from the powerful inward chains of sin, with an ability to act all the powers and faculties of the soul in a gracious manner. Hereby is the power of sin in the soul destroyed. And this also is given us in the gospel. There is power administered in it to live unto God, and to walk in all his commandments; and this also gives evidence unto the truth of the apostle's assertion.

THIRDLY, The law *doth not supply us with effectual motives and encouragements* to endeavour the ruin of the dominion of sin in a way of duty; which must be done, or in the end it will prevail. It works only by fear and dread, with threatenings and terrors of destruction; for although it says also, "Do this, and live," yet withal it discovers such an impossibility in our nature to comply with its commands, in the way and manner wherein it enjoins them, that the very promise of it becomes a matter of terror, as including the contrary sentence of death upon our failure in its commands. Now, these things enervate, weaken, and discourage, the soul in its conflict against sin; they give it no life, activity, cheerfulness, or courage, in what it undertakes. Hence those who engage themselves into an opposition unto sin, or a relinquishment of its service, merely on the motives of the law, do quickly faint and give over. We see it so with many every day. One day they will forsake all sin, their beloved sin, with the company and occasions inducing them thereunto. The law hath frightened them with divine vengeance. And sometimes they proceed so far in this resolution that they seem escaped from the pollutions of the world; yet soon again they return to their former ways and follies, 2 Pet. ii. 20–22. Their "goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away." Or if they do not return to wallow in the same mire of their former pollutions, they betake themselves to the shades of some superstitious observances, as it is in the Papacy: for they openly succeed into the room

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of the Jews, who, being ignorant of the righteousness of God, and not submitting thereunto, went about variously to establish their own righteousness, as the apostle speaks, Rom. x. 3, 4; for in that apostate church, where men are wrought on by the terrors of the law to relinquish sin and set themselves in opposition unto its power, finding themselves altogether unable to do it by the works of the law itself, which must be perfectly holy, they betake themselves to a number of superstitious observances, which they trust unto in the room of the law, with its commands and duties. But the law makes nothing perfect, nor are the motives it gives for the ruin of the interest of sin in us able to bear us out and carry us through that undertaking.

But the motives and encouragements given by grace to endeavour the utter ruin of sin in a way of duty are such as give life, cheerfulness, courage, and perseverance; they continually animate, relieve, and revive the soul, in all its work and duty, keeping it from fainting and despondency: for they are all taken from the love of God and of Christ, from the whole work and end of his mediation, from the ready assistances of the Holy Ghost, from all the promises of the gospel, from their own with other believers' experiences; all giving them the highest assurance of final success and victory. When the soul is under the influence of these motives, whatever difficulty and opposition it meets withal from soliciting temptations or surprisals, "it will renew its strength, it will run and not be weary, it will walk and not faint," according to the promise, Isa. xl. 31.

FOURTHLY, *Christ is not in the law;* he is not proposed in it, not communicated by it,—we are not made partakers of him thereby. This is the work of grace, of the gospel. In it is Christ revealed; by it he is proposed and exhibited unto us; thereby are we made partakers of him and all the benefits of his mediation. And he it is alone who came to, and can, destroy this work of the devil. The dominion of sin is the complement of the works of the devil, where all his designs centre. This "the Son of God was manifested to destroy." He alone ruins the kingdom of Satan, whose power is acted in the rule of sin. Wherefore, hereunto our assurance of this comfortable truth is principally resolved. And what Christ hath done, and doth, for this end, is a great part of the subject of gospel revelation.

The like may be spoken of the communication of the Holy Spirit, which is the only principal efficient cause of the ruin of the dominion of sin; for "where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty," and nowhere else. But we receive this Spirit not "by the works of the law," but "by the hearing of faith," Gal. iii. 2.

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CHAPTER VI.

The practical observations drawn from, and application made of, the whole text.

HAVING opened the words, and made some improvement of them, I shall now take one or two observations from the design of them, and issue the whole in a word of application.

Obs. 1. It *is an unspeakable mercy and privilege to be delivered from the dominion of sin.* As such it is here proposed by the apostle; as such it is esteemed by them that believe. Nothing is more sweet, precious, and valuable, unto a soul conflicting with sin and temptation, than to hear that sin shall not have the dominion over it. Ah! what would some give that it might be spoken unto them with power, so as that they might steadfastly believe it and have the comfort of it? "Fools make a mock of sin," and some glory in the service of it, which is their shame; but those who understand any thing aright, either of what is present or what is to come, do know that this freedom from its dominion is an invaluable mercy; and we may consider the grounds which evidence it so to be.

First, It appears so to be from *the causes of it.* It is that which no man can by his own power and the utmost of his endeavours attain unto. Men by them may grow rich, or wise, or learned; but no man by them can shake off the yoke of sin. If a man had all the wealth of the world, he could not by it purchase this liberty; it would be despised. And when sinners go hence to the place where the rich man was tormented, and have nothing more to do with this world, they would give it all, if they had it, for an interest in this liberty.

It is that which the law and all the duties of it cannot procure. The law and its duties, as we have declared, can never destroy the dominion of sin. All men will find the truth hereof that ever come to fall under the power of real conviction. When sin presseth on them, and they are afraid of its consequents, they will find that the law is weak, and the flesh is weak, and their duties are weak, and their resolutions and vows are weak;—all insufficient to relieve them. And if they think themselves freed one day, they shall find the next that they are under bondage. Sin, for all this, will rule over them with force and rigour. And in this condition do some spend all their days in this world. They kindle sparks of their own, and walk in the light of them, until they lie down in darkness and sorrow. They sin and promise amendment, and endeavour recompenses by some duties, yet can never extricate themselves from the yoke of sin. We may therefore learn the excellency of this privilege, first, from its causes, whereof I shall mention some only:—

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1. The *meritorious procuring cause* of this liberty is the death and blood of Jesus Christ. So it is declared, 1 Pet. i. 18, 19; 1 Cor. vi. 20, vii. 23. Nothing else could purchase this freedom. Under the power and dominion of sin we were, and could not be delivered without a ransom. "Christ died, and rose, and revived," that he might be our Lord, Rom. xiv. 9, and so deliver us from the power of all other lords whatever. It is true, there was no ransom due to sin or Satan who was the author of it. They were to be dethroned or destroyed by an act of power. Both the devil and sin, which is his work, are to be "destroyed," not appeased, Heb. ii. 14; 1 John iii. 8. But "the strength of sin is the law," 1 Cor. xv. 56; that is, through the righteous sentence of God, we were held by the law obnoxious unto the condemning power of sin. From that law we could not be delivered but by this price and ransom. Two things hence follow:—

(1.) Those who live in sin, who willingly abide in the service of it, and endure its dominion, do cast the utmost contempt on the wisdom, love, and grace of Christ. They despise that which cost him so dear; they judge that he made a very foolish purchase of this liberty for us with his dearest blood. Whatever it be, they prefer the present satisfaction of their lusts before it. This is the poison of unbelief. There is in it a high contempt of the wisdom and love of Christ. The language of men's hearts that live in sin is, that the liberty which he purchased with his blood is not to be valued or esteemed. They flatter him with their lips in the outward performance of some duties; but in their hearts they despise him and the whole work of his mediation. But the time is approaching wherein they will learn the difference between the slavery of sin and the liberty wherewith Christ makes believers free. And this is that which is now tendered unto sinners in the dispensation of the gospel. Life and death are here set before you; choose life, that ye may live for ever.

(2.) Let those that are believers, in all their conflicts with sin, live in the exercise of faith on this purchase of liberty made by the blood of Christ; for two things will hence ensue:—[1.] That they will have a weighty argument always in readiness to oppose unto the deceit and violence of sin. The soul will hereon say to itself, "Shall I forego and part with that which Christ purchased for me at so dear a rate, by giving place to the solicitations of lust or sin? shall I despise his purchase? God forbid!" See Rom. vi. 2. By such arguings is the mind frequently preserved from closing with the enticements and seductions of sin. [2.] It is an effectual argument for faith to use in its pleading for deliverance from the power of sin. We ask for nothing but what Christ hath purchased for us; and if this plea be pursued, it will be prevalent.

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2. The *internal efficient cause* of this liberty, or that whereby the power and rule of sin is destroyed in us, is the Holy Spirit himself; which farther evinceth the greatness of this mercy. Every act for the mortification of sin is no less immediately from him than those positive graces are whereby we are sanctified. It is "through the Spirit" that we "mortify the deeds of the body," Rom. viii. 13. Where he is, there, and there alone, is liberty. All attempts for the mortification of sin without his especial aids and operations are frustrate. And this manifests the extent of the dominion of sin in the world. He alone by whom it can be destroyed, and all those efficacious operations of his whereby it is so, are generally despised; and they must live and die slaves unto sin by whom they are so. Wherefore, a great part of our wisdom for the attaining and preserving this liberty consists in the acting of faith on that promise of our Saviour, that our heavenly Father will "give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him" of him. When sin in any instance, by any temptation, urgeth for power and rule in us, we are ready to turn into ourselves and our own resolutions, which in their place are not to be neglected; but immediate cries unto God for such supplies of his Spirit as without which sin will not be subdued, we shall find our best relief. Bear it in mind, try it on the next occasion, and God will bless it with success.

3. *The instrumental cause of this freedom* is the duty of believers themselves in and for the destruction of sin. And this also manifests the importance of this privilege. This is one of the principal ends of all our religious duties,—of prayer, of fasting, of meditation, of watchfulness unto all other duties of obedience; they are all designed to prevent and ruin the interest of sin in us. We are called into a theatre, to fight and contend; into a field, to be tried in a warfare. Our enemy is this sin, which strives and contends for the rule over us. This we are to resist even unto blood; that is, unto our utmost in doing and suffering. And certainly that is in itself and unto us of the highest importance, which, on divine appointment and command, is the great end of the constant endeavours of our whole lives.

Secondly, It appears so to be from *the consideration of the bondage which we are delivered from thereby.* Bondage is that which human nature is most averse from, until it be debased and debauched by sensual lusts. Men of ingenuous spirits have in all ages chosen rather to die than to be made slaves. But there is no such bondage as that which is under the dominion of sin. To be under the power of base lusts, as covetousness, uncleanness, drunkenness, ambition, pride, and the like, to make provision to fulfil their desires in the wills of the mind and the flesh, is the worst of slavery.

But we may say what we please on this subject; none think them-

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selves so free, none make such an appearance of generous freedom unto others, as those who are avowed servants of sin. If those are not freemen who do what they please, and are for the most part approved in what they do, who puff at all their enemies, and scorn such as pusillanimous slaves who go not forth unto the same compass of excess with them, who shall be esteemed free? They plead, with the Pharisees, that they are the only freemen, and were never in bondage to any! The servile restraints of fear from divine judgment and future accounts they wholly despise! See the description, Ps. lxxiii. 4–11. Who so free, so joyous, as such persons! As for others, they are "plagued all the day long, and are chastened every morning," verse 14; yea, they go heavily and mournfully under the oppression of this enemy, crying out continually for deliverance.

But the truth insisted on is not at all impeached by this observation. It is a great part of the slavery of such persons that they know not themselves to be slaves, and boast that they are free. They are born in a state of enmity against God and bondage under sin; and they like well of it, as all abject slaves do under the worst of tyrants: they know no better. But true liberty consists in inward peace, tranquillity of mind, designs for and inclinations unto the best things, the most noble objects of our natural, rational souls. All these they are utter strangers unto who spend their lives in the service of vile and base lusts. Envy not their gallantry, their glittering appearances, their heaps of wealth and treasures; they are, on the whole, vile and contemptible slaves. The apostle determines their case, Rom vi. 17. It is a matter of eternal thankfulness unto God that we are delivered from being "the servants of sin."

Yea, it is an evidence of grace, of a good frame of spirit, when a soul is made really sensible of the excellency of this freedom, when it finds the power and interest of sin to be so weakened as that it can rejoice in it, and be thankful to God for it, Rom. vii. 25.

Thirdly, It is so with respect unto *the end of this bondage*, or what it brings men unto. If, after all the base drudgery which sinful men are put unto in the service of their lusts; if, after all the conflicts which their consciences put them on, with fears and terrors in the world,—they could expect any thing of a future reward hereafter, something might be spoken to alleviate their present misery: but "the wages of sin is death;" eternal death, under the wrath of the great God, is all they are to look for. The end of the dominion of sin is to give them up unto the curse of the law and power of the devil for evermore.

Fourthly, It keeps men off from *the participation of all real good, here and hereafter*. What men under the power of sin do enjoy will quickly appear to be "a thing of nought." In the meantime, they have

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not the least taste of the love of God; which alone takes out the poison of their enjoyments. They have not the least view of the glory of Christ; without which they live in perpetual darkness, like those who never behold the light nor sun. They have no experience of the sweetness and excellency of the gracious influences of life, and strength, and comfort, from the Holy Ghost, nor of that satisfaction and reward which is in holy obedience; nor shall ever come to the enjoyment of God.

All these things, and sundry others of the like sort, might be insisted on and enlarged, to manifest the greatness of the mercy and privilege which is in a freedom from the dominion of sin, as it is here proposed by the apostle; but the principal design I intended is accomplished, and I do but touch on these things.

I shall add one observation more, and with it put a close to this discourse:—

Obs. 2. *It is the great interest of a soul conflicting with the power of sin to secure itself against its dominion, that it is not under its dominion,* not to have the cause hang dubious in the mind. To clear the truth hereof we may observe the things that follow:—

First, The conflict with sin, making continual repentance and mortification absolutely necessary, will continue in us whilst we are in this world. Pretences of perfection here are contrary to the Scriptures, contrary to the universal experience of all believers, and contrary to the sense and conscience of them by whom they are pleaded, as they make it evident every day. We pray against it, strive against it, groan for deliverance from it; and that, by the grace of Christ healing our nature, not without success. Howbeit this success extends not unto its absolute abolition whilst we are in this world. It will abide in us until the union of the soul and body, wherein it hath incorporated itself, be dissolved. This is our lot and portion; this is the consequent of our apostasy from God, and of the depravation of our nature thereby.

You will say, then, "Whereto serves the gospel and the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ in this case, if it be not able to give us deliverance herein?" I answer, It doth give us a fourfold relief, which amounts virtually to a constant deliverance, though sin will abide in us whilst we are in this world:—

1. It is so ordered that *the continuance of sin in us shall be the ground, reason, and occasion, of the exercise of all grace, and of putting a lustre on our obedience.* Some excellent graces, as repentance and mortification, could have no exercise if it were otherwise; and whilst we are in this world, there is a beauty in them that is an overbalance for the evil of the remainders of sin. And the difficulty which is hereby put on our obedience, calling continually for

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the exercise and improvement of all grace, renders it the more valuable. Herein lies the spring of humility and self-resignation to the will of God. This makes us love and long for the enjoyment of Christ, putting an excellency on his mediation; whence the apostle, on the consideration of it, falls into that ejaculation, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord!" Rom. vii. 25. This sweetens unto us our future rest and reward. Wherefore, the continuance of us in this state and condition in this world,—a state of spiritual warfare,—is best for us, and highly suited unto divine wisdom, considering the office and care of our Lord Jesus Christ for our relief. Let us not complain, or repine, or faint, but go on with Christian fortitude unto the end, and we shall have success; for,—

2. There are, by the grace of Christ, such supplies and aids of spiritual strength granted unto believers, that *sin shall never proceed farther in them than is useful and needful for the exercise of their graces.* It shall never have its will upon them nor dominion over them, as we have before declared.

3. There is *mercy administered in and by the gospel for the pardon of all that is evil in itself or in any of its effects:* "There is no condemnation unto them that are in Christ Jesus." Pardoning mercy, according to the tenor of the covenant, doth always disarm this sin in believers of its condemning power; so that, notwithstanding the utmost endeavours of it, "being justified by faith, they have peace with God."

4. *There is a season when, by the grace of Christ, it shall be utterly abolished,*—namely, at death, when the course of our obedience is finished.

Wherefore, to affirm that this sin, and consequently a conflict with it, doth abide in believers whilst they are in this world, is no disparagement unto the grace of Christ, which gives such a blessed deliverance from it.

Secondly, There is a double conflict with and against sin. The one is in those that are unregenerate, consisting in the rebellion of light and conscience against the rule of sin in many particular instances; for although sin be enthroned in the will and affections, yet the knowledge of good and evil in the mind, excited by the hopes and fears of things eternal, will make head against it, as unto the performance of sundry duties and abstinence from sin. This conflict may be where sin is in the throne, and may deceive themselves, supposing it to be from the rule of grace, when it is only from the rebellion of light and the charge of a conscience yet unseared. But there is a conflict with sin where grace hath the rule and is enthroned; for although grace have the sovereignty in the mind and heart, yet the remainders of sin, especially in the corrupt

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affections, will be continually rebelling against it. Now this, we say, is the interest of all, namely, to inquire of what sort and kind that conflict with sin is which is in them. If it be of the first sort, they may yet be under the dominion of sin; if of the latter, they are freed from it. Wherefore, whilst the mind is dubious in this case and undetermined, many evil consequences it will be perplexed withal. I shall name some of them:—

1. Such a soul can have no solid peace, because it hath not satisfaction what state it doth belong unto. 2. It cannot receive refreshment by gospel consolations in any condition, for its just fears of the dominion of sin will defeat them all. 3. It will be dead and formal in all its duties, without spiritual courage and delight, which will at length make it weary of them. So, 4. All grace, especially faith, will be weakened and impaired under this frame continually. 5. Fear of death will hold the soul in bondage. Wherefore, it is highly necessary to have this case well stated and determined in our minds; whereto if the foregoing discourses may contribute any thing, it is what was designed in them.

There remains only to give some few directions how the prevalency of sin, unto such a degree as to render the case about its rule dubious in the mind, may be obviated and prevented. Some few of the many that might be given I shall propose:—

1. The great rule for preventing the increase and power of vicious habits is, *watch against beginnings*. Sin doth not attempt dominion but in particular instances, by one especial lust or another. Wherefore, if any sin or corrupt lust begin, as it were, to set up for a peculiar predominancy or interest in the mind and affections, if it be not entertained with severe mortification, it will ruin the peace, if not endanger the safety, of the soul. And when this is so, it may easily be discovered by any one who keepeth a diligent watch over his heart and ways; for no sin doth so entirely advance itself in the mind and affections, but it is promoted therein either by men's natural inclinations, or by their circumstances on occasions of life, or by some temptation which they have exposed themselves unto, or by some such neglect wherein the frequency of acts has strengthened vicious inclinations. But these things may be easily discerned by those who are in any measure awake unto their soul's concernments.

The strict charge given us by our Lord Jesus Christ to "watch," and that of the wise man, "above all keepings to keep our heart," have especial regard unto these beginnings of sin's obtaining power in us. So soon as a discovery is made of its coincidence or conjunction with any of these ways of the promotion of its power, if it be not opposed with severe and diligent mortification, it will proceed in the method declared, James i. 14, 15.

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Those who would be wise must familiarize wisdom unto their minds by a continual free converse with it. They must say unto wisdom, "Thou art my sister," and call understanding their kinswoman, Prov. vii. 4. So will wisdom have power in and over their minds. And if we suffer sin, by any of the advantages mentioned, to familiarize itself unto our minds,—if we say not unto it, "Get thee hence," upon the first appearance of its activity for power in us,—it will put hard for the throne.

2. *Carefully inquire and try whether such things which you may do or approve of in yourselves do not promote the power of sin, and help on its rule in you.* This method David prescribes, Ps. xix. 12, 13. "Secret sins," such as are not known to be sins, it may be, to ourselves, make way for those that are "presumptuous." Thus pride may seem to be nothing but a frame of mind belonging unto our wealth and dignity, or our parts and abilities; sensuality may seem to be but a lawful participation of the good things of this life; passion and peevishness, but a due sense of the want of that respect which we suppose due unto us; covetousness, a necessary care of ourselves and our families. If the seeds of sin are covered with such pretences, they will in time spring up and bear bitter fruit in the minds and lives of men. And the beginnings of all apostasy, both in religion and morality, lie in such pretences. Men plead they can do so and so lawfully, until they can do things openly unlawful.

3. *Keep your hearts always tender under the word.* This is the true and only state of inconsistency with and repugnancy to the rule of sin. The loss hereof, or a decay herein, is that which hath opened the flood-gates of sin amongst us. Where this frame is, a conscientious fear of sinning will always prevail in the soul; where it is lost, men will be bold in all sorts of follies. And that this frame may be preserved, it is required,—(1.) That we cast out all vicious habits of mind that are contrary unto it, James i. 21; (2.) That we preserve an experience of its power and efficacy on our souls, 1 Pet. ii. 1–3; (3.) That we lay aside all prejudices against those that dispense it, Gal. iv. 16; (4.) That we keep the heart always humble, in which frame alone it is teachable, Ps. xxv. 9,—every thing in the preaching of the word comes cross and unpleasing to the minds of proud men; (5.) That we pray for a blessing on the ministry, which is the best preparation for receiving benefit by it.

4. *Abhor that peace of mind which is consistent with any known sin.* Men may have frequent surprisals into known sins, but if, whilst it is so with them, they refuse all inward peace but what comes in by most fervent and sincere desires of deliverance from them and repentance for them, they may be safe from the dominion of sin; but if men can on any hopes, or presumptions, or re-

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solutions, preserve a kind of peace in their minds whilst they live in any known sin, they are nigh the borders of that security which is the territory wherein sin doth reign.

5. *Make continual applications unto the Lord Christ, in all the acts of his mediation, for the ruin of sin*, especially when it attempts a dominion in you, Heb. iv. 16. This is the life and soul of all directions in this case, which needs not here to be enlarged on; it is frequently spoken unto.

Lastly, Remember that a *due sense of deliverance from the dominion of sin is the most effectual motive unto universal obedience and holiness;* as such it is proposed and managed by the apostle, Rom. vi.

END OF VOL. VII.

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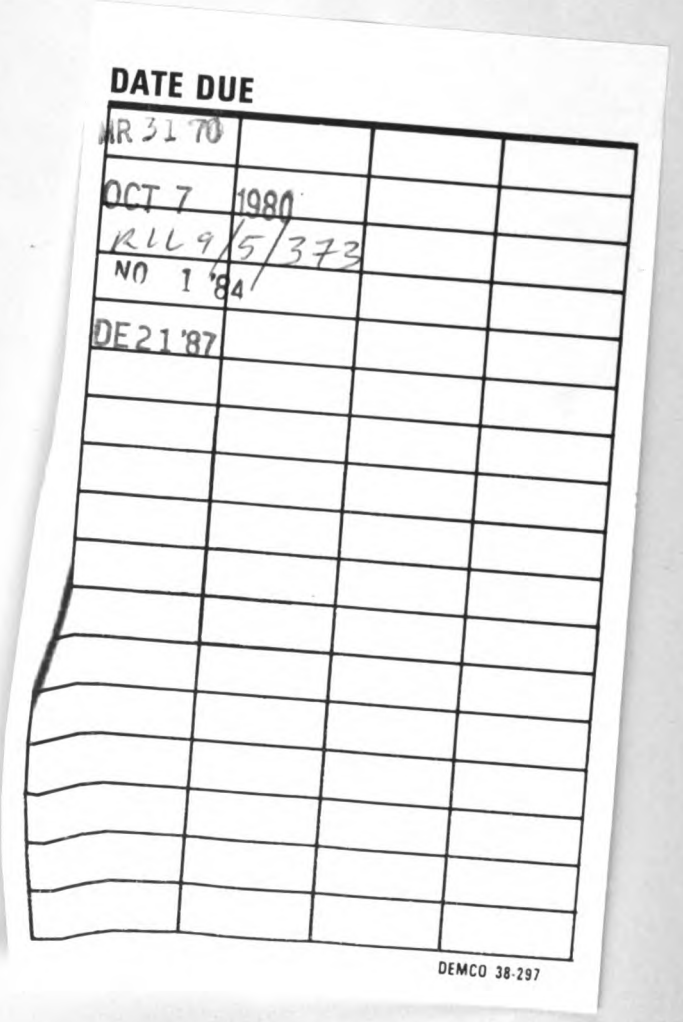

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